The ASEAN

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DOUBLE ISSUE
APRIL–MAY 2021

1st ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

Gender Equality

Bridge to Progress



ISSN 2721-8058

THE INSIDE VIEW
A Year in Review

GENDER EQUALITY
Transformational and Feminine Leadership

VIEWPOINT
Mari Elka Pangestu
Managing Director
World Bank



Ministerial Bodies   Sectoral Bodies   *) takes guidance from and reports to both AMCA and AMRI

AMRI-ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information

AMCA-ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts

AMMY-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth

ASED-ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting

AMMS-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Sports

AMRDPE-ASEAN Ministers on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication

AMMSWD-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development

AMMW-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women

ALMM-ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting

ACCSM-The Heads of Civil Service Meeting for ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters

AHMM-ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting

AMMDM-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management

COP-AADMER-Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response

AMME-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Environment

COP to AATHP-Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution

SOMCA-Senior Officials Meeting on Culture and Arts

COCI-The ASEAN Committee for Culture and Information

SOMRI-Senior Officials Meeting Responsible for Information

SOMY-Senior Officials Meeting on Youth

SOMED-Senior Officials Meeting on Education

SOMS-Senior Officials Meeting on Sports

SOMRDPE-Senior Officials Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication

SOMSWD-Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development

ACWC-ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children

ACW-ASEAN Committee on Women

SLOM-Senior Labour Officials Meeting

SOM-ACCSM-Senior Officials Meeting on ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters

SOMHD-Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development

ASOEN-ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment

COM to AATHP-Committee under the Conference of Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution



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The ASEAN

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Dato Lim Jock Hoi

Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC)
Kung Phoak

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The ASEAN's past issues are available at asean.org

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Cover Illustration by **Jojo Limpo** | Composed by **Kramakata**



Message from the Secretary-General of ASEAN

The ASEAN magazine was launched in May 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic caused unimaginable loss of lives and livelihoods around the world. ASEAN initiated concerted efforts to respond to this health emergency and the subsequent economic downturn in our region.

During this time, ASEAN strengthened cooperation with dialogue partners and other international organisations to enhance our pandemic response and prepare the region for future crises. Among notable achievements are the establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases as well as the launch of the *ASEAN COVID-19 Comprehensive Recovery Framework* and its *Implementation Plan*.

As we respond to this pandemic, the work continues on various fronts: ensuring workers' rights, protecting children and other vulnerable groups, promoting gender equality, empowering the youth, responding to disasters, as well as strengthening commitments to climate change action and sustainable development.

In the past year, the magazine has become a reliable source of information on ASEAN's work in responding to the pandemic and easing the burdens of our people. The publication also serves as a window to the ongoing work of various sectors under ASEAN's three community pillars. Communicating with the people we serve is an important part of the work we do. Listening to the experiences and views of ordinary citizens is equally important as they inform and inspire our work.

Spearheaded by the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department, *The ASEAN* embodies our very spirit of cross-pillar, cross-sectoral collaboration in realising the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. I congratulate the editorial team for their dedication in conveying ASEAN's key messages in an engaging and accessible manner, as well as to thank all departments for contributing to the magazine. I look forward to reading more issues of *The ASEAN* and support the Community's continued efforts to bring ASEAN closer to its people.

Dato Lim Jock Hoi
Secretary-General of ASEAN



Message from the Ambassador-Designate of India to ASEAN

This is to convey my heartfelt congratulations to the ASEAN Secretariat team for successfully completing one year since the launch of the very first issue of *The ASEAN*. This is even more praiseworthy in the light of difficult circumstances owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like to compliment the editorial board on the choice of the themes, the design layout, and illustrations used. They make the publication very readable and relevant at the same time. The publication is a big stride taken not only in the direction of forging further ASEAN identity but also in informing the non-ASEAN readers about ASEAN.

India's civilization ties with all ASEAN countries are manifested in the present-day close strategic partnership between India and ASEAN. India's approach to Indo–Pacific, keeping ASEAN at its core, reinforces this partnership. Ideas that are generated, including by the youth, through numerous creative engagements, shall always find expression in *The ASEAN*.

We are very proud to be part of the project.

I wish the very best to the team of the ASEAN Secretariat for their new issue.

Jayant N. Khobragade
Ambassador-Designate of India to ASEAN



Message from the Country Coordinator for ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations

It is with great pleasure that I extend my warmest greetings to the readers of *The ASEAN* magazine on its first anniversary.

As the regional architecture evolves, ASEAN's goal has moved beyond sustaining regional peace. Building on its strengths and achievements in the past five decades, ASEAN has increasingly focused on improving the lives and meeting the needs of people in the region, without leaving anyone behind, in order to build a truly people-centred Community.

Creating such a community is impossible without instilling a sense of belonging and unity among ASEAN citizens. I, therefore, commend the ASEAN Secretariat for its remarkable work in producing *The ASEAN* magazine, which has successfully introduced ASEAN's work to a wide range of ASEAN audience over the past year. I also wish to thank India, one of ASEAN's key Dialogue Partners, for its generous contribution to the publication of this magazine.

Looking ahead, I hope *The ASEAN* magazine will continue to bring ASEAN citizens closer, foster a true ASEAN identity among the region's population of over 650 million, and spread ASEAN stories to a wider audience around the globe.

Kittisak Klomchit
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
Permanent Mission of Thailand to ASEAN
Country Coordinator for ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations 2018-2021



21st ASEAN-India Joint Cooperation Committee Meeting, 31 March 2021

Viewpoint:

Kung Phoak

Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community

DSG Kung Phoak reflects on the rationale for producing *The ASEAN*, the challenges of getting it off the ground, and what it has achieved so far. He also discusses the future prospects of the magazine in light of ASEAN's community-building and communication goals and the trend towards digitalisation.



What was your idea for the magazine and why did you have this vision of having one for the ASCC?

DSG Kung: When I first joined ASEC (ASEAN Secretariat), I had one big question: How can people have ownership of the things that we are doing? It's not just about people benefitting from what we are doing, but also being a part of the story. The only way for all of the people to be part of the story and to benefit from what we are doing is for them to know more about what we are doing.

We then started talking about what would be the best way to share these stories to the general audience—not just policymakers, but also people who may not have a lot of experience with or may not know a lot about ASEAN. The magazine could be a channel for people to voice their views, shape policy directions, and find out how they can contribute.

Then, we looked at how people could get information, understand more about ASEAN. When it comes to regional matters, sometimes people seem out of touch. There are so many problems happening at the national level that what's going on at the regional level is something that they may not know. So, this is the second objective.

Lastly, I thought about how we can create a bridge between the policymakers' world, the leaders, and the people through some sort of a publication that does not just present the work of ASEAN or the views of the leaders, but also stories that are happening every day on the ground. When we look at the content of the magazine, it is not just about the meetings, it is not just about the views of our ministers, but also the

> **This magazine is a platform where the leaders and the ASEAN people can meet and shape the future of the region together.**



views of people from all walks of life, such as business people, shop owners, young entrepreneurs, or youth activists. In a way it is a melting pot of some sort, right? People can come together in terms of sharing ideas, sharing views, embracing all sorts of questions, and offering all sorts of solutions as well.

These are the three main objectives that summarise all of the work that we do. One thing that I hope the magazine can continue to do is to speak the language of the people on the street, not the language used in meeting rooms. In this way, they can feel that they have some way to influence the direction of community building, have some ownership of the discourse, and have some say on the kind of policies and decisions that the region as a collective body will take.

Can you explain to us the challenges that you faced when you tried to generate interest and support for the magazine? How hard was it to sell it to the people you needed support from?
DSG Kung: ASEAN is used to doing things a certain way. For example, after we discuss matters in the meeting room, we have outcomes that we make available to the public in a shorter version. But ASEAN has its own way of working when it comes to the kind of language they use and the kind of information that they share with the public. So, I think there is an internal struggle about how much and in what ways the work we do can be translated into stories.

Having said this, I think that ASEAN colleagues are not resistant to the idea that these kinds of stories need to be shared with the general public. They also understand the importance of letting people know what the ASEAN community pillars are doing because they sometimes also feel the disconnection between their world and that of the general public. They started to embrace it. The challenge now is how we can help our policymakers find the best way to communicate with people.

Would you also say that the magazine is an analytical tool?
DSG Kung: That's the truth. This is actually the internal struggle of our people. On one hand, we want to maintain the way the problem is presented in the policy world. But on another hand, we want to make sure that the way we interpret and write policy conversations is easily understood by those who do not have the background or experience. We have to find the right balance between our policymaking role and our responsibility to the general audience.

Do you think that we are reaching our goals based on the audience reaction and the content of the magazine?
DSG Kung: I don't think that we have achieved what we want to achieve in terms of bringing the stories to all corners of the ASEAN region. The language of the magazine is still English. Not many people can understand that. I hope that the magazine will be translated to different national languages so that more people can really benefit from this magazine. I believe that there is a lot of people who are really interested in understanding and learning more about ASEAN but we need to create an enabling environment for them to really get a chance to understand and read all of these stories.

Earlier, I mentioned the three main objectives. Put into a single sentence, this magazine is a platform where the leaders and the ASEAN people can meet and shape the future of the region together.

What do we need to do more of so we can make that shift and convince more people that communicating what you're doing, communicating your work to the people you serve is important?
DSG Kung: In terms of sharing the views and stories or providing information, these are all in the magazine. My hope is that we go one step further by translating all of these stories and information into something concrete and can be addressed by policies or decisions of ASEAN as a collective body.

For example, we have young people telling us what they think about our responses to the COVID-19, the experiences they are going through, the possible solutions to the health crisis, and the things that ASEAN Member States can do. These kinds of information are useful for policymakers, for leaders to read in the magazine. But I think there is another way for us to help and that is to translate all of these information into concrete action. At the end of the day people will ask you the question: "I share my stories, I share my views, and then what's next?"

Our aim is for the magazine to one day evolve into a place that puts together all of these information, stories, and conversations and turn them into some sort of a roadmap or even vision for the ASEAN region which all the Member States can implement. We want to make sure that all people benefit from the contribution that they are making to this magazine.

What reactions have you gotten, especially from policymakers, ASEAN Member States, and the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN? Readers are asking, what's next after sharing all these stories? How can we narrow that gap and connect both worlds together based on their reactions?
DSG Kung: Actually, we haven't had a lot of extremely difficult conversations in ASEAN although it's been almost 60 years. But, with all these disruptions, we are going to have them very soon. The safest way for us to have a conversation and not abandon the community building project entirely is to make sure that we have all the people behind us. To rally the people behind us, we have to let them know what we are doing and what they can benefit in the long term. For example, people may ask, "We don't understand what you are doing and now you ask us to give up our jobs to our friend from other countries?" Imagine at a certain point in the future when we begin talking about deep regional integration where people can move around without having to apply for work permits and things like that, then what would be the reaction of the local people? We have a chance to build trust, to build confidence, to build support among the people through this kind of communication. And then when we start to have conversations on tough issues, it gives us some support.

In terms of messaging, what are the greatest achievements of ASCC that you would like to communicate more in the magazine or that we have communicated already?
DSG Kung: One thing that I'm happy to see and I hope that we will be able to continue to do more is to transform ASEAN Secretariat into a knowledge hub for all the ASEAN Member States. The ability to produce quality papers and provide forward-looking and practical recommendations to all ASEAN Member States is something that I hope we can continue to deliver.

Another way forward is for the ASCC to continue to strengthen itself in the policymaking arena to support Member States. There are 15 sectoral bodies under the ASCC and our works have direct impacts on the health and well-being of hundreds of millions of people in the region. Advancing the implementation of the SDGs is also part of our main responsibility. Thus, our analytical capability is critical to the progress we've achieved over the years.

I hope that the magazine becomes actually part of these objectives.

Another thing that I hope to continue is strengthen the region's data capability. We are now looking at a possible ASCC Database Hub. Similar with the first initiative, there's this question of not having enough budget to do certain things.

At the end of the day, what really is important here is not to do things just for the sake of doing things. We want to make sure that all the tasks that we are undertaking are really benefiting the Member States. It is a challenge and I don't think we can achieve all of these in just one term or two terms or three terms. Let's look at our work plans. We need to strike a balance, which means trying to make sure that the plans include as many activities as possible that will not only address the problem at the national level, but also have regional characteristics and are useful in terms of community building efforts.

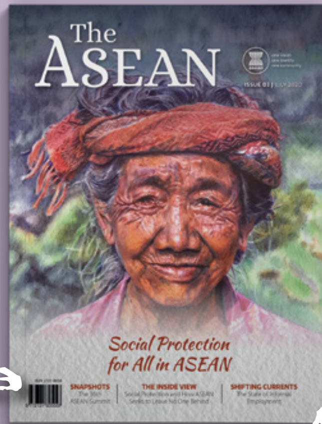
***The ASEAN* came out during the pandemic and most of the content has been about the pandemic, its impact on the people, and the work that ASCC has done to respond to it. What do you think about the work that ASCC has done in the past year and how well did we communicate that to our readers in the magazine?**
DSG Kung: During the past year, the magazine has played an important role in informing the public about what we are doing. In times of crisis like this, it is extremely important for people to understand what we are doing because at the end of the day, there will be questions about whether they can really benefit from being part of the ASEAN Community, right? The publication continues to bring the stories to the public on what the sectoral bodies are doing to tackle the problem of the pandemic. This is related to the earlier comment about building ASCC and the ASEAN Secretariat as a knowledge hub. Here, one aspect of our communication is to let people know that the things that we have been doing are based on evidence, based on research and comprehensive studies. In some ways, we also present that through the magazine. Again, I have to say that over the past year the magazine has played that role and it is extremely important because people come to understand more about what has been done at the regional level. It is extremely useful for them to understand how the region is operating and how they can be part of the solution. With this magazine as a way of communicating all of these activities and responses to the people, I think a lot more people can get this information and know about the many topics that ASEAN Member States or ASEAN as a regional body have been tackling over the years.

Our anniversary issue has the theme gender equality. What kind of message do we want our audience to take away about ASEAN's efforts on gender equality?
DSG Kung: I think it's always our intention to walk the talk. We have been talking about gender equality for quite a long time, but in my view, we haven't made as much progress as we want. We can still see a lot of problems that women and children are facing in our region. That's why we have been focusing pretty much on this particular topic and trying to push some initiatives and activities.

I don't think that we are short of policies or strategies on how we can improve the well-being of women and creating the environment where they can thrive and prosper. What we need is to start to get serious about the things that we've already agreed on and start to do something about it. I think that's the lacking part, right? I mean if you're talking about bridging to progress, we need to get serious about improving the well-being of women and children. ■







The Inside View





1st Year In Review

by *The ASEAN* Editorial Team











ASEAN Identity

In a 2018 poll on ASEAN awareness, nine out of 10 respondents in Southeast Asia identify themselves as ASEAN citizens. The same poll indicates that a majority of the respondents view shared identity as essential to creating a stronger region. But what constitutes ASEAN identity, and how can it be nurtured and promoted? These questions are explored in the inaugural issue of *The ASEAN* magazine.

Singapore's **Deputy Secretary of Industry and Information, Aaron Maniam,** says that the ASEAN awareness poll shows people's growing sense of connection to ASEAN but cites the need to strengthen this through deliberate policies and programmes. Examples of these programmes are the ASEAN Youth Fellowship and ASEAN Regional Quiz, which foster unity and cultural understanding. Maniam adds that SOMRI has a role to play in effectively communicating the message of shared identity.

For **Indonesia's Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi**, a large part of the ASEAN community has yet to feel a true "sense of belonging." Minister Marsudi says articulating and spreading a narrative of ASEAN identity will remind ASEAN of "who we are, where we come from, and where we are heading towards." She adds that involving the youth to advance the shared identity discourse is crucial since the youth comprise a third of the region's population.

According to **Indonesia's Director General of Culture, Hilmar Farid**, the foundation of ASEAN identity is the common set of values deeply held by ASEAN people. These include values shaped by constant interaction, trade, intermarriages, and alliances through generations, as well as the values and guiding principles stated in the ASEAN charter. He says that this regional identity must be nurtured by preserving the cultural heritage and identity of individual Member States, as well as supporting artistic and cultural exchanges and creative and cultural industries.

Meantime, **Nanyang Technological University Associate Professor Farish Noor** says that ASEAN Member States must correct the region's collective amnesia, "the forgetting of our common Southeast Asian roots," which was caused by colonial powers' redrawing of the map. This amnesia, he says, severed longstanding connection and fomented narrow forms of ethno-nationalism. He calls on academics to "reconnect our countries and societies to our shared regional past and identity" to "create a new generation of young ASEAN citizens who see and feel themselves to be Southeast Asians."

ASEAN Secretariat's Culture and Information Division notes that ASEAN declared 2020 as the year of ASEAN identity to elevate conversations about identity into the public sphere. The division says that ASEAN needs to enhance storytelling to draw and sustain citizens' interest in ASEAN and its developments. SOMCA is spearheading the development of a narrative of ASEAN identity that will resonate with people in ASEAN. Other storytelling initiatives include podcasts, webtoons, vlogs, and e-booklet that tell stories on the benefits of the ASEAN Community and a cultural and heritage digital archive that highlights the region's cultural vibrancy. ■



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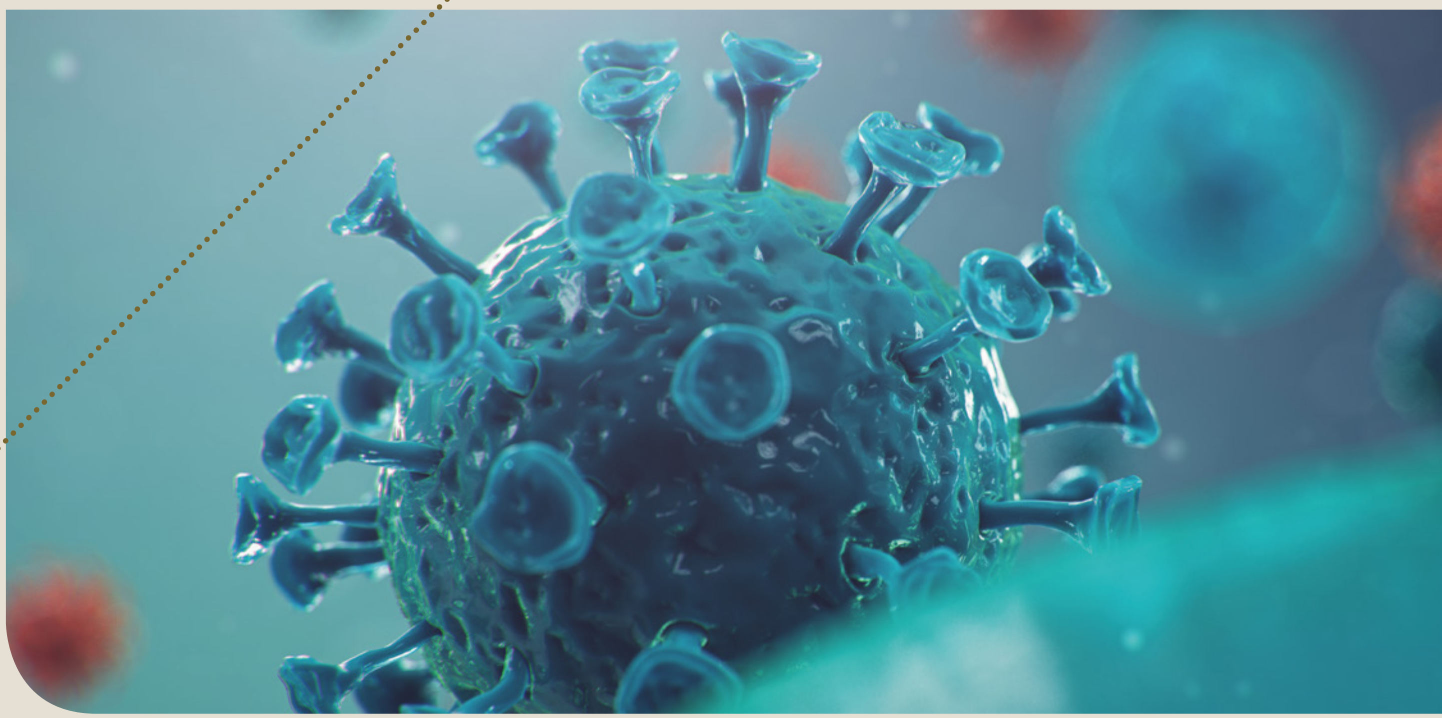
What's next?

Promoting ASEAN Awareness and Fostering ASEAN Identity
- ASEAN Identity Symposium
- ASEAN Identity Report
- E-exhibitions for ASEAN Cultural Heritage Digital Archive [July/August, October, November 2021]

Advancing the Implementation of ASEAN Communication Master Plan II
- Podcasts, Webtoons, 1-minute ASEAN Explains, ASEAN 101 Videos, Op-Ed
- Issue-specific Podcasts, Webtoons, Digital Visual Arts Competition
- ASEAN Webinar on Launch of ACMP II Products, Dubai Expo

Advancing the Promotion of Small and Medium-sized Creative Enterprises (SMCEs)/ Creative Economy
- ASEAN-ADBI Webinar on Creative Economy for Sustainable Development: Potential, Challenges and Ways Forward [May 2021]
- 2nd Arts and Culture Dialogue on SMCEs
- ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information Discussion Paper on Promotion and Development of SMCEs

Developing Framework for Fostering Greater Understanding, Tolerance and a Sense of Regional Agendas Among the Peoples of ASEAN
- Adoption of Framework for Fostering Greater Understanding, Tolerance and A Regional Sense of Agenda [38th ASEAN Leaders' Summit, October 2021]
- High Level Forum on Fostering Greater Understanding [May 2021]
- Regional Workshop on Fostering Greater Understanding [July 2021]



COVID-19 and ASEAN's Health Systems

COVID-19 has claimed close to 80,000 lives in Southeast Asia as of 31 May 2021. To make sense of this loss, we just have to imagine a full-capacity sports stadium or a town's entire population suddenly gone. Added to this are the millions infected, are out of jobs, or are suffering financially, emotionally, and mentally. No country, population, or sector was left untouched.

Since its launch in May 2020, *The ASEAN* has given various voices a space to express how they have been grappling with the pandemic and its ripple effects. Nearly all our issues feature COVID-19-related articles or interviews from ASEAN sectoral bodies, leaders of various organisations, experts, and ordinary citizens. For our November-December 2020 issue, we focus on the state of our health infrastructure which is at the frontline of our battle against the pandemic.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus says in an interview that a well-prepared and resilient national health system begins with recognising health as a fundamental human right. He calls on countries to commit to universal health coverage, noting, "Ensuring everyone can access quality health services without facing financial hardship is essential for building strong economies and global health security." He also encourages countries to invest in primary healthcare services which he says "are the eyes and ears of the health system in communities" and "can help detect and respond to an outbreak early, which is vital for stopping it before it becomes widespread." At the global front, he notes the historic international collaboration that gave rise to the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator. This initiative aims to support the development and equitable distribution of tests, treatments, and vaccines to fight COVID-19.

One of ACT Accelerator's pillars is the vaccine pillar called COVAX, which seeks to secure a varied portfolio of COVID-19 vaccines and equitably apportion these to participating countries, including some 92 countries in the lower-income bracket. **Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was the Board Chair of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance from 2015 to 2020.** In an interview, Dr. Okonjo-Iweala says that the COVAX facility is a model for international cooperation, and the lessons, infrastructure,

and expertise that arise from it may be harnessed to prepare for and respond to other global emergencies in the future.

Canadian Ambassador to ASEAN Diedrah Kelly holds a similar view that universal, publicly funded healthcare is necessary to surmount any health crisis. She says that while Canada's healthcare system remains robust, the pandemic exposed some vulnerabilities, such as the delayed collection and use of disaggregated data related to COVID-19 which could have facilitated assistance to women and other groups severely impacted by the pandemic; and weak integration of long-term care in Canada's health system.

The regional bloc's health sector has banded together to respond to the pandemic. The **ASEAN Secretariat's Health Division** says that 27 interventions are in progress to address health and health system issues and support the pandemic response. They include existing mechanisms that were immediately activated, such as the ASEAN Emergency Operation Centre Network for Public Health Emergencies and ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre, to facilitate data exchange and analysis. Proactive interventions, on the other hand, include new initiatives, such as the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases which is envisioned to be the regional hub for surveilling, preventing, and containing transborder health emergencies; as well as new partnership projects with WHO, EU/GIZ, and Canada.

Two of ASEAN's existing regional health mechanisms are focused on ensuring the adequate supply of life-saving drugs and vaccines for the ASEAN population. The ASEAN Drug Security and Self-Reliance (ADSSR), led by **Malaysia's Ministry of Health**, aims to improve the access of countries to "medicines for therapeutic use, including essential drugs, orphan drugs, antidotes, high-cost medicines, biological products, and medicines for emerging infectious diseases, pandemics, and neglected tropical diseases." Meantime, the ASEAN Vaccine Security and Self-Reliance (AVSSR), led by **Thailand's National Vaccine Institute**, seeks to attain vaccine security and has completed a regional vaccine baseline survey to determine "the most current capacity, gap and/or challenges in relation to the whole vaccine value chain, i.e. research and development, production, regulation and immunisation, at regional and country levels within ASEAN."

Associate Professor Ngiam Kee Yuan of Singapore's National University Health System, notes the shift to telemedicine during the pandemic and sees this as a precursor to a higher demand for low-cost and high-quality digital delivery of healthcare services in the future.
He says that ASEAN countries can achieve this "through policy changes that promote the adoption of AI technologies on cloud infrastructure to deliver better healthcare services on mobile devices." ■

What's next?

ASEAN Health Cluster 1 on Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle
- ASEAN Aerobic Fun Dance for the ASEAN Car Free Day [awarding: August 2021]
- Adoption of the ASEAN Leaders Declaration on the Reformulation and Production of Healthier Food and Beverages Options [38th ASEAN Leaders' Summit, October 2021]
- Adoption of the ASEAN Plus Three Leaders Statement on Cooperation on Mental Health Among Adolescents and Young Adults [38thASEAN Leaders' Summit, October 2021]
- Launch of the ASEAN Tobacco Control Report 2016-2020 [15th AHMM, October 2021]
- Launch of the ASEAN Framework for the Development and Implementation of Fiscal Measures on Sweetened Beverages to Promote Health in ASEAN Member States [15th AHMM, October 2021]
- Launch of the ASEAN IEC Messages for Healthy and Active Ageing [15th AHMM, October 2021]
- Launch of the Guidelines and Minimum Standards for the protection, promotion, and support of breastfeeding and complementary feeding including the implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, and Relevant World Health Assembly Resolutions [15th AHMM, October 2021]
- Launch of the ASEAN Food and Nutrition Security Report 2021 [15th AHMM, October 2021]
- Launch of the Web-based ASEAN Nutrition Surveillance System (Beta Version) [15th AHMM, October 2021]

ASEAN Health Cluster 2 on Responding to All Hazards and Emerging Threats
- ASEAN Health Sector Statement at the UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS [8-10 June 2021]
- ASEAN Dengue Forum to commemorate the 2021 ASEAN Dengue Day [15 June 2021]
- Second ASEAN Lymphatic Filariasis and Virtual Consultation for the Finalisation of the ASEAN Workplan on the Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis [14 July 2021]
- Adoption of ASEAN Leaders Declaration on Ending AIDS in ASEAN [38th ASEAN Leaders' Summit, October 2021]
- Launch of the Report on Rapid Assessment on Regulatory Measures in Combating Antimicrobial Resistance in ASEAN [15th AHMM, October 2021]
- Launch of the ASEAN Guideline on International Tuberculosis Notification and Referral Among ASEAN Member States [15th AHMM, October 2021]
- Conduct of the First ASEAN Regional Conference on Disaster Health Management [September or October 2021]

ASEAN Health Cluster 3 on Strengthening Health Systems and Access to Care
- ASEAN Health Ministers' Adoption of the Regional Strategic and Action Plan on AVSSR [14 May 2021]
- Publication on ASEAN Follow Up Assessment on the Current Status of Health Technology Assessment Institutionalisation and Capacity Needs of ASEAN Member States [June 2021]
- AVSSR Webinar Series [June –Oct 2021]
- Development of the ASEAN Framework on Health Coverage of Documented Migrants including Migrant Workers and Special Populations
- Development of the Regional Collaborative Strategy for ADSSR
- Development of the ASEAN Pharmaceutical Regulatory Policy and ASEAN Pharmaceutical Regulatory Framework
- Development of the ASEAN Recommendations on Quality Health Care

ASEAN Health Cluster 4 on Ensuring Food Safety
- Food safety training: Workshop on Risk Based Inspection [July 2021]
- Publication of the Assessment of Consumer Participation and Empowerment Program on Food Safety in ASEAN Member States [July 2021]
- Development of the ASEAN Framework on Consumer Participation and Empowerment on Food Safety
- Development of Regional Guide to Develop/Improve National Pesticide Residue Monitoring Programmes



The ASEAN November-December 2020 Special edition
http://bit.ly/TheASEAN_SP

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, Pandemics and The Future of Work

Digitalisation is changing the nature of work rapidly. The shift has accelerated even more due to the COVID-19 pandemic. ASEAN's current and future working population needs to be equipped with adequate skills to seize opportunities that technological advancement and the fourth industrial revolution will generate.



In *The ASEAN*'s June 2020 issue, **Minister Dao Ngoc Dung, Chair of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council 2020,** underscores that human resource development is a priority for ASEAN. With ASEAN emerging as a world centre of innovation and development, workers in the region need to be upskilled or reskilled to participate in emerging technological jobs. He proposes that reforms are necessary in vocational and technical education, with training meeting the requirements of the labour market. Labour supply and demand needs must also be better balanced. He stresses the need to adopt lifelong learning. Accompanying this is the need to uphold decent work and to strengthen social protection.

The **ASEAN Secretariat's Labour and Civil Service Division** cites various ASEAN commitments and initiatives to develop ASEAN's human resources. One of these is the ASEAN Declaration on Human Resources Development for the Changing World of Work adopted at the 36th ASEAN Summit in June 2020. ASEAN labour and education ministers are firmly committed to preparing ASEAN's workforce for the future and promoting decent work.

Aubeck Kam, Senior Labour Officials Meeting Leader of Singapore, visualises the world of work after the COVID-19 pandemic. The sudden closure of workplaces, combined with movement restrictions, wage cuts and

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job losses, has raised the need to review the present employment landscape. He notes how technology has enabled us to work from home and ASEAN to continue with its meetings. The post-COVID-19 workplace will need to adopt progressive workplace practices that benefit workers, who should be motivated to keep upgrading their skillsets. Strong collaborative partnerships between the state, employers and employees, are the best way forward.

Dr. Piyawat Sivaraks, former Chair of the Senior Officials Meeting for the ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters, notes that telecommuting, online education and fintech are now considered the "new normal." Digital transformation has affected business and governments alike, including the civil service. He notes that there is a need for the civil service to be agile and embrace the digital shifts to serve ASEAN's citizens better.

With lifelong learning seen as a crucial component in the future of work, **Jesus Lorenzo R Mateo, Chair of the Senior Officials Meeting on Education,** shares how the Philippines has ensured that mechanisms are in place to sustain lifelong learning. The evolving technical-vocational and livelihood curricular programmes ensure that individuals can acquire a range of relevant skills. Alternative learning delivery modules are provided as a means to address the digital divide for K-12 learners during this present pandemic.

Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Kung Phoak views education as a key to development. He says, **"**The transformative power of education cannot be disputed. Education leads to better health outcomes, higher social capital, more gender-equal societies, and decent work opportunities. Studies reveal that every additional year of schooling is linked to a 10 per cent increase in income."

Dr. Peter Schoof, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Indonesia, ASEAN and Timor-Leste, advocates that a public TVET system can make a significant contribution when it comes to providing qualifications during the current industry 4.0 era. ASEAN Member States are at various stages of TVET development. Establishing an ASEAN TVET Council will enable Member States to overcome the current institutional fragmentation in TVET and allow lifelong learning.

The ASEAN Secretariat's Connectivity Division shares that more can be done to build ASEAN human capital. People-to-people connectivity and mobility can be strengthened by addressing information, awareness, regulatory, and incentive gaps. These gaps, in turn, can be addressed by bolstering partnerships between businesses, educational institutions, and governments in developing competency-based curriculum and critical skills. ■



The ASEAN issue 2 June 2020
https://bit.ly/TheASEAN_V2



The ASEAN November-December 2020 Special edition
http://bit.ly/TheASEAN_SP

What's next?

Decent Work for All:
- High-Level Dialogue Forum and Launching Ceremony of the Comparative Study Report on Laws and Policies in the Management of Migrant Workers in ASEAN
- Public Campaign for Safe and Fair Migration in the ASEAN Region
- Training Workshop on the ASEAN Guideline on Gender Mainstreaming Into Labour and Employment Policies Towards Decent Work For All
- Ninth ASEAN Labour Inspection Conference
- 'ASEAN on Point' Public Forum and 2021 ASEAN & SEAMEO Webinar "Preparing ASEAN Workforce for Post-COVID-19"

Future Ready ASEAN:
- Study on Enhancing the Competitiveness of ASEAN Human Resources through Responsive TVET Curriculum
- High-Level Dissemination Forum and Launching of the Regional Study Report on Human Resources Development Readiness in ASEAN
- Adoption of the ASEAN Declaration on Promoting Workers for Competitiveness, Resilience, and Agility on the Future Work

*Please refer to the *The ASEAN* Special Issue 2020 on related roadmaps and guidelines notated at the 37th ASEAN Summit.

From our Conversations

"Due to the pandemic, for the company to stay afloat, we have been affected by the pay cut. To cope, we had considered what we needed to survive."

"We plan on continuing with our current ventures even when we go back to flying, as something like this can happen again."
–Syed Abdul Rahman and Nadira Ramli, husband and wife, both pilots turned entrepreneurs (November-December 2020)

"The pandemic has a huge impact on our lives and suddenly, our plans and dreams got delayed. We planned to save money for our wedding by working onboard, but it turned out that I could only work for two months, and the pandemic is still here, so we don't have money."

"Those who are working in tourism are looking for another job. The sales of my warung (shop) are not too good either; sometimes we get less than before the pandemic. But I will stay strong to realise our dream."
–Riza Jurada and Yudi Yastika, former cruise ship staff and waiting to get married (November-December 2020)



Photo Credit: © pang_oasis/Shutterstock; © Supavadee butradee/Shutterstock

Youth, Sports and Education

With the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fast-changing landscape of work, equipping the youth with essential skills is vital to prepare them for the future.

The ASEAN focuses on the youth, who make up one-third of the region's population of 650 million, in our August 2020 and February-March 2021 editions. We looked at the role of youth as they chart their paths forward and how ASEAN governments provide an environment that allows them to thrive.

Youth and Skills

In *The ASEAN's* August 2020 issue, the **ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth (AMMY) Chair, Minister Alounxai Sounnalath,** cites the many ways that ASEAN engaged and supported the youth following the sector's 2016-2020 work plan. In the next few years, ASEAN will focus its priorities on five development areas, i.e. education, health and well-being, participation and engagement, employment, and ASEAN awareness, values and identity. To prepare the youth for future challenges, ASEAN aims to foster digital skills among the youth and institutionalise youth engagement mechanisms.

On the education front, **ASEAN Secretariat's Director for Human Development Directorate, Rodora T. Babaran,** reviews the significant role of higher education in creating a competitive workforce. She elaborates on ASEAN's cooperation with its external partners in enhancing the standard and accessibility of higher education in the region.

Employability of the youth is an issue that needs an immediate solution as many young people in the region still find it challenging to land a job after they graduate. **Franziska Seel, Senior Technical Advisor of Deutsche Gesellschaft Für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ),** points out that "the outdated and often overloaded curricula and a focus on memorising theoretical knowledge do not prepare the youth adequately for the world of work." To improve employability and address the skills gap, she suggests that ASEAN take a more labour market-responsive approach, such as an emphasis on pre-service and in-service technical and vocational education and training.

Youth involvement in sports is also strongly encouraged by ASEAN as it can empower people and unite nations. **ASEAN Secretariat's Education, Youth and Sports Division** explains how regional sports events, like the SEA Games, ASEAN Para Games, and ASEAN School Games foster unity in diversity and strengthen mutual understanding. ASEAN's sports ministers agreed that in the next five years, ASEAN would focus on multiple dimensions in sports, which signal that ASEAN perceives sports as a platform for social development and as an industry.

FIFA Secretary General Fatma Samoura says that the ASEAN and FIFA's agreement, signed in November 2019, covers a broad range of collaboration areas with a strong focus on education by implementing FIFA's Football for Schools Programme across ASEAN. ASEAN and FIFA will also collaborate on implementing strategies to promote healthy lifestyles and inclusive participation in football, particularly for women and marginalised communities.

Singaporean swimmer Joseph Schooling describes what it takes to be a world-class athlete. He says that passion and perseverance drive him to reach for the stars: "If you have that mind-set and that perseverance, nothing can really stop you or anyone." He believes that athletes need a solid atmosphere, a good foundation, and strong support that will propel them to the level they need to be to compete against the world's best.

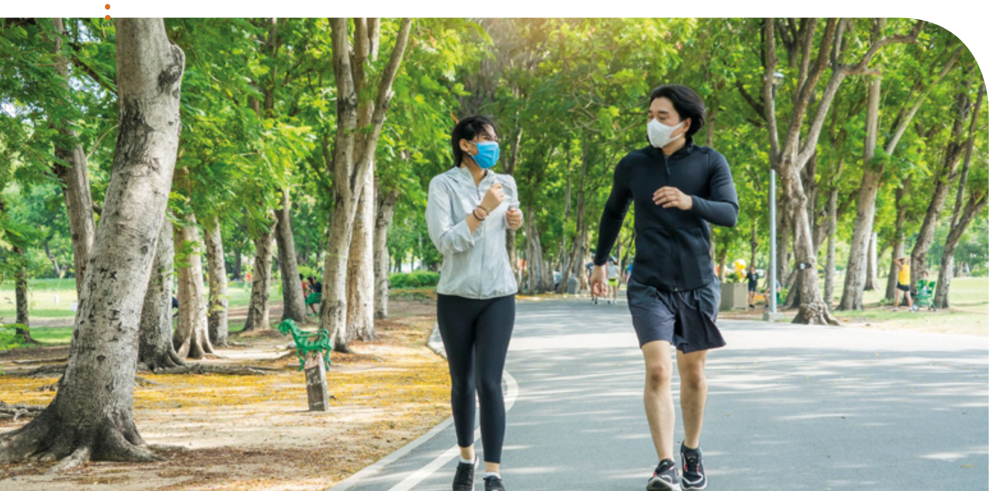
Youth and Innovation

In the February-March 2021 issue, the opening article from **Singapore Education Minister Lawrence Wong** cites the factors for Singapore's consistent ranking on the Global Innovation Index's list of top 10 most innovative countries. He highlights that education is more than just about book knowledge and academic abilities; it is also about instilling key traits like communication and teamwork and creative and innovative thinking. Many youth-led initiatives appeared during the pandemic, which he says is "a testament of our youths' innovative spirit, creativity, and resourcefulness."

The pandemic has forced schools to shift to online learning. But **Shigeru Aoyagi, UNESCO Bangkok Director,** points out that 80 million students in the East Asia and Pacific region do not have access to remote learning programmes due to the digital divide. Physical access to connectivity and devices should be accompanied by the development of appropriate digital skills to bridge the gap. He says, "Schools and teachers play critical roles as points of entry for digital access as they are often the first place where students engage with ICT and build foundational skills."

Media reports highlight the rise of mental health issues during the pandemic. **ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development Brunei Darussalam**, Dr. Haji Zulaidi bin Haji Abdul Latif, acknowledges the importance of addressing this issue, saying that "the ASEAN needs to prioritise and strengthen its mental health programmes as part of its current response initiatives to COVID-19."

The ASEAN also features stories from ASEAN youth leaders who participated in the ASEAN Youth Sport for Development, Peace, and Leadership (S4PDL) project and initiated sports projects to empower their communities. ■



What's next?

- ASEAN and Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) are jointly organising a monthly webinar series, starting from February up to November this year. The series aims to provide a platform to discuss regional issues and policy responses related to COVID-19 pandemic. The webinar series cover various topics of discussion, including on mental wellbeing for teachers and students, TVET, and higher education.
- ASEAN is currently finalising the ASEAN Work Plan on Sports from 2021 to 2025 for formal adoption.
- ASEAN is finalising the ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2021-2025.

From our Conversations

"People need to know how their data on the Internet are obtained and how many types of data they are giving away to different Internet sites. Most people don't know the amount of personal data they make available on social media."
–Aung Myint Myat Kyaw, programmer and cyber security specialist

"Many people are still reluctant to get professional help from psychologists because they're afraid of being judged, of being labelled 'crazy,' lack of faith, or other bad labels attached to mental health. We want to wipe out this social stigma and change the mindset that it's really okay to see psychologists, and they will not become less of a human if they go to psychologists."
–Audrey Maxmillian Herli, co-founder of Riliv, a mental health app

"I built a playground with a lot of different materials. I built it at the school, so students who live around here, at night they can always come and play. I feel that what I did affects them, and that makes me feel happy. Even if they're kids, they can also feel stress from the COVID-19 pandemic. So, if they come to play and they feel happy, they can release their stress, at least just for a little bit."
–Yadanar Oo, youth leader



The ASEAN issue 4 August 2020
https://bit.ly/TheASEAN_V4



The ASEAN issue 10 February-March 2021
http://bit.ly/TheASEAN_V10

Social Protection For All

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the inequalities of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the ASEAN region. Women, children, workers, persons with disabilities, and older persons are the most at risk in times of crises.



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The ASEAN's July 2020 issue highlights the importance of social protection systems to cushion the socio-economic impact on people from the pandemic and other challenges like poverty, migration, disasters, and climate change impact.

"People provided with social protection coverage were more resilient to shocks and risks and able to rebuild their lives, as those of their communities," explains **Deputy Director-General Thiphasone Soukathammavong** of the Lao PDR Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare Planning and International Cooperation Department in his article.

The 2020 **ASEAN Rapid Assessment on Livelihoods across ASEAN** reveals that population groups are vulnerable to the pandemic's challenges and economic impact. The poor are the hardest hit, and cash transfers were the most dominant modes of assistance provided by the ASEAN Member States to their citizens.

Lao PDR chairs the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (AMMSWD). In an interview with *The ASEAN*, **Labour and Social Welfare Minister Khampheng Saysompheng** stresses that stronger economies mean larger capacities to provide social protection for people. Developing the labour sector plays a central role in economic growth. Particularly in Lao PDR, he says it is vital to building local and rural communities from the ground up.

Providing adequate and meaningful social protection requires collaborative work across ASEAN's sectors, ensuring that no one is left behind. The crises highlight the need for governments to reassess and reform their social protection systems and increase public spending. As Director-General Thiphasone adds, "social welfare systems that can reduce poverty and address persistent inequality require adequate financing as well as strategic planning."

The newly established ASEAN Training Centre for Social Work and Social Welfare, located in Thailand, will also help strengthen ASEAN's capacity to respond to crises and disasters. In the magazine's October 2020 edition, **Executive Director Anothai Udomsilp** explains social workers will be given courses on disaster risk reduction, social protection, and assistance to disaster victims. He adds that the centre is designing curricula "that include courses such as global social work and social welfare and human trafficking, as well as online training courses on protection of children in the context of migration."

This year in March, ASEAN and UNICEF launched a joint campaign to raise the profile of social workers in the region to increase support for their critical contributions to people's welfare. *(see page 54, for the full story)*

The magazine's Conversations section debuted in the July 2020 issue. The section features interviews with people from all walks of life who are community builders, innovators, and advocates for social change. It has become a channel for people in the region to share their concerns and hopes about what ASEAN can do to improve their lives.

Southeast Asia has a rapidly ageing population that is particularly vulnerable to health and financial challenges. In the Social Protection edition, we hear from four accomplished older ASEAN citizens who share insights on resilience, longevity and purpose. ■



The ASEAN issue 3 July 2020
https://bit.ly/TheASEAN_V3



The ASEAN issue 6 October 2020
https://bit.ly/TheASEAN_V6

What's next?

Senior Officials Meeting for Social Welfare Development (SOMSWD) Regional Priorities in the 2021-2025 Work Plan

- Recognise and value the importance of the family and care work to nation-building to ensure ASEAN's people's welfare
- ASEAN Member States will implement social protection solutions that are inclusive, adaptive, responsive, and comprehensive to help reduce poverty and build people's resilience from different shocks and crises, including pandemics based on the Member States capacities and resources
- Data and evidence of the impact of the pandemic and other risks to vulnerable groups will be analysed and utilised by the ASEAN Member States
- Efforts among different stakeholders to build the resilience of ASEAN's people from poverty, climate change, disasters and health emergencies will be integrated and complementary
- Social protection for vulnerable children
- Operationalise the ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration and the Declaration on Protection of Children from all Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse in ASEAN

From our Conversations

"I don't have plans to retire. It is always my dream for Indonesian culinary to be known known around the world and preserved by everyone, so I will keep working."
–William Wongso, chef and food connoisseur

"Southeast Asian families are still better off in terms of dealing with ageing parents. We take care of our elders in our homes. Moving them to nursing homes is unthinkable. But times are changing. When children have to go out and make a living, it puts a strain on everybody, especially when there is not enough money for a caregiver. This is how ASEAN could help. It should encourage and fund more studies on ageing from biological and cultural perspectives to inform policy."
–Francisco A. Datar, PhD, physical anthropologist

Climate Change Action

The year 2020 is one of the hottest years on record—reminding us of the urgency of addressing the climate crisis, with Southeast Asia being one of the regions most vulnerable to climate change. *The ASEAN's* September 2020 edition focuses on climate change issues, detailing efforts of ASEAN and its people to reverse climate change.



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Cambodian Environment Minister Say Samal, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment Chair, talks about the measures taken by ASEAN to fight climate change. His key messages include:

- As parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Paris Agreement, ASEAN Member States have proactively taken measures to address the issue at local, national, regional levels by setting various mechanisms, policies, strategies, and action plan for greenhouse gas reduction and climate adaptation.
- ASEAN continues to mainstream disaster risk reduction (DRR) into climate change adaptation (CCA) policy by (i) facilitating the establishment of a clear institutional and policy framework on DRR and CCA integration at the regional and national level, and (ii) supporting capacity building initiatives for the Member States on hazard and risk mapping.
- ASEAN works collaboratively with various stakeholders from different sectors and levels in addressing climate change. The ASEAN Member States have established numerous mechanisms and initiatives in their respective countries to engage the private sector and civil society in climate change responses.

UN Environment Programme Executive Director Inger Andersen highlights how the triple planetary crisis—climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution—threatens human lives and the earth's ecosystems. The region also faces these threats. She elaborates on these several concerns:

- Climate change is likely to raise sea level and increase extreme weather events that will displace or kill people, damage infrastructure, and disrupt commerce in these population and economic centres.
- The economy and livelihoods of ASEAN Member States are heavily reliant on agriculture, natural resources like

fisheries and forestry. Climate change and biodiversity loss, and pollution are already wreaking havoc on the natural patterns and processes that run these industries.

- Climate change disproportionately affects the poor, who live in threatened areas, work in threatened sectors, and who rarely have a safety net when things take a turn for the worse.

"The triple planetary crisis may feel secondary when compared with the immediacy of deep economic recession brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. But it is no less pressing," says Andersen. She calls on ASEAN nations to imbue momentum into a green transition as guided by the six principles to drive the recovery laid out by the UN Secretary-General.

What's next?

- Launch of Peatland Pilot Sites in Indonesia and Malaysia (SUPA Component 1) [June-September 2021]
- People for Peat (PFP) Symposium Series (SUPA Component 2) [28 April, 17 June, 1 July, 28 July, 18 August]
- Launch of ASEAN State of Climate Change Report [July 2021]
- Launch of the ASEAN Green Initiative [August 2021]
- Launch of Scoping Paper on Strengthening Science and Policy Interface in Climate Change related Decision-Making Process: Laying the Groundwork for the Development of Long-term Strategies in ASEAN [September 2021]
- 16th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment [October 2021]
- ASEAN Joint Statement on Biodiversity to Fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity [October 2021]
- Adoption of ASEAN Joint Statement on Climate Change to UNFCCC COP-26 [November 2021]
- Peatland Pavilion at UNFCCC COP-26 (MAHFSA) [1-2 November 2021]
- ASEAN-UK High-Level Panel Discussion on Climate Change (at the sideline of UNFCCC COP26) [November/December 2021]
- Adoption of ASEAN Joint Statement on Chemicals and Waste to the Conference of the Parties (COPs) to the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm Conventions [2021]
- Launch of ASEAN Climate Finance Strategy [2021]
- ASEAN Natural Capital Roadmap [2021]
- Adoption of ASEAN Sustainable Consumption and Production Framework [2021]
- ASEAN Haze Portal Launch [2021]

This issue features an article by the **Global Environment Centre (GEC) Malaysia**, an NGO appointed by ASEAN as the Technical and Operational Support Partner for the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy 2006-2020, looking at how peatland becomes the most important terrestrial ecosystem for regulating climate change. GEC points out that ASEAN peatlands are up to 20 meters thick and can store 10-20 times more carbon than forests on mineral soil. Still, peatlands in the region faced severe degradation, driven by economic activities. However, ASEAN has recorded substantial progress in slowing, and in some cases reversing, the degradation of peatlands and building their resilience to climate change through the regional approach.

The 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) was set to take place in November 2020 but was postponed to 2021 due to the pandemic. The **COP26 Regional Ambassador to Asia-Pacific and South Asia, Ken O'Flaherty, and the United Kingdom Ambassador to ASEAN, Jon Lambe**, share that the UK's COP26 Presidency stresses international collaboration to deliver a green and resilient recovery. Ahead of the COP26 in 2021, the UK will work with ASEAN on joint events covering a range of COP26 priorities, including nature-based solutions, adaptation and resilience, and accelerating the clean energy transition in Southeast Asia.

From our Conversations

"Southeast Asia still has good, intact forests but forest fires are everywhere. My wish is that ASEAN can become the role model, the champion for protecting old forests. Can you imagine if we lose them? It would be such a huge loss. It must be now more than ever, for us to protect what we have left. Protecting the environment is tough. I still think that to tackle threats to the environment, we would have to tackle them on many fronts, not just climate change per se. It's about communicating with different stakeholders who speak different languages."
–Lin Ji Liaw, Biodiversity and Natural History Society founder

"We are our systems, our ecosystems. Our economies aren't designed to allow us to live sustainably and we can't expect those who have caused the problem to fix the problem for us. So, we need to be creative, we need to be able to think about those systems, It's hard work. I am now in positions where I'm talking to big banks, regional banks and I'm telling them, 'Look as long you're still trading in money, we are not shifting the needle.'"
–Khairun Nisa Zabidi, climate action advocate

For our Shifting Currents section, *The ASEAN* interviewed Norway's first woman Prime Minister, **Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland,** who believes that sustainable development is a concept rooted in the principles of equality, justice, and human rights. Regional bodies like ASEAN, she says, can play a crucial role in ensuring that commitments to the sustainable development goals agreed at a global level can be effectively implemented on the ground.

On COVID-19, Dr. Brundtland says that it "has shone a harsh light on existing inequalities, from the distribution of economic resources to access to health services. Universal Health Coverage is essential to help ASEAN countries improve their health systems in the face of COVID-19 and possible future pandemics."

Deputy Secretary-General for ASEAN Economic Community Aladdin D. Rillo elaborates on the measures taken by the ASEAN Member States to address the COVID-19 pandemic, which fall into three broad categories: (i) fiscal stimulus packages; (ii) monetary policy and financial measures; (iii) and sector-specific measures and intervention. He talks about the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, which serves as the region's exit strategy from the crisis, focusing on actionable and impactful measures that will enhance health systems; strengthen human security; allow the region to maximise the potential of intra-ASEAN market and broader economic integration; accelerate inclusive digitalisation, and pave the way for ASEAN to build back better into a sustainable and resilient future. ■



The ASEAN issue 5 September 2020
https://bit.ly/TheASEAN_V5

Disaster Management and Resilience

Over 400 disaster events on top of a deadly global pandemic. These were the burdens carried by the ASEAN Member States in 2020. Experts warn that weather-related disasters will only worsen, increasing in frequency and intensity, as a result of climate change. The October 2020 issue of *The ASEAN* takes stock of the regional bloc's existing mechanisms and current initiatives to help countries manage and reduce risks posed by disasters.

ASEAN **Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi** notes that the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), which entered into force in 2009, serves as the policy framework for regional and national action on disasters. The agreement binds all Member States to reduce disaster losses and enhance regional cooperation in disaster response. It created the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre), whose functions are to facilitate the timely collection and analyses of disaster-related data, coordinate the deployment of emergency response and assessment teams, and manage the regional emergency stockpile and delivery of relief goods to disaster sites.



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Over the past years, **AHA Centre** has been at the helm of ASEAN's collective response to sudden-onset disasters, such as typhoons and earthquakes. AHA Centre's cumulative knowledge and experience in preparing for and mitigating sudden-onset disasters can be brought to bear in managing slow-onset disasters as well. Slow-onset disasters are less visible but can turn out to be more devastating.

Agricultural drought, a slow-onset disaster, dominates the disaster riskscape of Southeast Asia, according to **UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) Executive Secretary Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana**. It has affected all Member States and accounts for 60 per cent of the region's average annual losses due to disasters. UNESCAP is involved in initiatives to strengthen Asia's early warning systems for flood and drought and build the technical capacities of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam to monitor the onset and progression of drought.

Disasters take a heavy economic toll on countries and the affected population. Financial assistance from multilateral agencies and other stakeholders only gets through post-disaster, to facilitate community recovery and reconstruction. **Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Jose Antonio R. Tan III and Benita Ainabe** mention ADB's shift to a more proactive approach by approving one billion US dollars of contingent disaster financing loans to strengthen the disaster resilience of Indonesia and the Philippines. Tan and Ainabe say that governments must consider the concept of "risk layering" in crafting their national disaster risk financing strategy and facilitate the private insurance sector's broader participation in disaster risk financing.

ASEAN Secretariat's Disaster Management and Humanitarian Division notes that ASEAN is poised to approve the AADMER Work Programme for 2021-2025, prioritising disaster risk assessment and monitoring, integration of disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation, disaster-responsive social protection, and resilient infrastructure. The regional bloc aspires to become a global leader in disaster management and share with other countries its pool of knowledge and expertise, amassed and honed through years of experience in disaster response.

What's next?

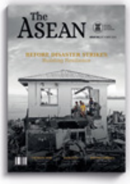
- Humanitarian and Emergency Logistics Innovation Expo [20-25 May 2021]
- Protection, Gender, and Inclusion Virtual Road Trip Session 2 with the theme "Enhancing the Accountability and Effectiveness of Humanitarian Logistics" [24 May 2021]
- 3rd ASEAN-ICRC Joint Platform "Adaptation to the Evolving 'Riskscape' in ASEAN and Beyond"—Financial and Humanitarian Responses to Complex Emergencies [23-24 June 2021]
- ASEAN Strategic Policy Dialogue on Disaster Management [24-26 August 2021]
- Senior Executive Programme on Disaster Management
- ASEAN Regional Framework & Guidance on Protection, Gender, and Inclusion in Disaster Management (publication)
- ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Drought Adaptation 2021-2025 (publication)
- ASEAN Disaster Resilience Outlook—ASEAN's Journey for a Disaster Resilience Region (publication)
- ASEAN Mapping Exercise to Promote Synergy with Other Relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, and Entities Associated with ASEAN on Disaster Management (publication)

From our Conversations

"I came nine days after the earthquake, but when I arrived in Baluase district of Sigi, there were still many people who needed treatment…I met people with an open wound and had not been stitched, or someone with a bone fracture but not yet referred to any hospital, and other kinds of injury that had not been followed up due to the difficult access. But they were very patient; many of them even had started to rebuild their houses two to three days after the disaster. I think that's the characteristic of people in such a situation—they're resilient."
–Rangi W. Sudrajat, medical humanitarian aid worker at Médecins Sans Frontières

In disaster areas, we usually serve meals in bowls. We cook a dish like say, chicken soup (Filipino tinola soup). Imagine people, who have just lived through a strong typhoon, smiling instantly as they see smoke and smell the aroma of piping hot soup. Every single time, we see instant smiles. So, that's why our line has always been—let's give them hot, comfort food."
–Precious Leano, co-founder of Art Relief Mobile Kitchen

"Now, people are prepared and each town has an evacuation plan and designated shelters. Before a typhoon comes, we stock up on food, put our clothes in plastic bags. Especially with the pandemic, local health centers and barangay (village) officials are ready to launch evacuation plans. I think people need to be given the proper training and information. How much rice do you need to survive for how many days? Instructions like that."
–Rowel Balais, Typhoon Haiyan survivor



The ASEAN issue 6 October 2020
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Bridging the Gap, Filling the Void

What Readers Have to Say About *The ASEAN*



MIGUEL ALVARO L. KARAAN
TRAINING OFFICER, PHILIPPINE SOCIAL SCIENCE COUNCIL AND GRADUATE STUDENT, ASIAN CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES

(Re)learning My Identity Through *The ASEAN*

"More than anyone else in the world, it is Southeast Asians who need to learn more about Southeast Asia." (Noor. [2020]. *The ASEAN*, Issue 1, p. 21)

The ASEAN Secretariat launched in May 2020 its magazine, *The ASEAN*, aiming to share and communicate ASEAN's work to its citizens. In its nine editions since then, the magazine had featured articles delving on various issues and developments in the ASEAN society, ranging from ASEAN culture and identity to health, education, and technology, among others. It holistically gives voice to the different sectors of the ASEAN community—women, youth, workers, and other vulnerable groups.

In his article for the maiden issue, "Strangers in Our Own Neighborhood: Why Southeast Asians need to learn about Southeast Asia," Dr. Farish A. Noor of the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore discussed why the present generation of ASEAN citizens has seemingly lost grasp of their shared history and identity, following years of colonisation by Western powers and the failure of ASEAN states to generate a common historical narrative, focusing instead on producing state-centric official historical and cultural knowledge. In the Philippines, for example, the cultural heritage landscape seems to be dominated by houses, churches, institutional buildings from the Spanish and American colonial periods, which has made it somewhat unique from the cultural heritage landscape of its neighbors. But quite recently, scholars have been giving emphasis on the folk and vernacular nature of these cultural properties—how vernacular and folk identities have been infused to the colonial (or perhaps, vice versa).
In rediscovering these identities, we also uncover our deeper cultural connections with our ASEAN neighbors, revealing that we may have much more in common with one another than what the remnants of our colonial pasts are allowing us to see at first glance.

In order to rediscover and relearn our shared history and culture, we would need all the sources of knowledge and information we could get. And this is where *The ASEAN* plays a major role. Through its articles, especially under the sections The Inside View and Shifting Currents, we are able to explore the many emergent issues and developments in the region.
We learn that with our similar histories and cultures come similar problems and, perhaps, solutions (cases in point: the issues of climate change and disaster).
We learn from a diverse mix of scholars, leaders, and writers from the different nations comprising the ASEAN. We learn updates on the various activities and initiatives of the ASEAN towards building a community. Through the content of *The ASEAN*, we learn more about one another and, by doing so, we learn more about ourselves.

It is also highly important that these kinds of resources are read not only by scholars and policymakers, but by the general Southeast Asian population as well. It is noteworthy that the magazine is presented not with lengthy and wordy articles that do not really invite readers to indulge, but with a balanced mix of words and graphics that work together to inform and engage. Numbers and data are presented in reader-friendly infographics without sacrificing the wealth of information. Photos and graphics are integrated well into the layout to make it easier to the eyes and to make the written stories real and relatable.

As a sociocultural studies researcher in my country, I found the magazine helpful as a source of information and jump-off point for further research inquiry on the various aspects of the ASEAN society. With our ever-changing world, there is much more that *The ASEAN* can write about, and I definitely am looking forward to reading and learning more, in this magazine, about my region, my society, my identity.



JOSEPH HICKS, PHD
EMERITUS PROFESSOR, RITSUMEIKAN ASIA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY AND PRINCIPAL, RITSUMEIKAN UJI JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, KYOTO, JAPAN

Bringing Out Inspiring Stories of the ASEAN Youth

Having been deeply involved in education in Asia in many different academic and administrative roles, I can't help but be deeply impressed with the February-March issue of *The ASEAN*. What a relief to open the pages of an exceptionally well-designed periodical and see a positive future for the region. The celebration of young movers and shakers and their stories is powerful medicine against nay-sayers. Most readers have not been as fortunate as I have to teach (but mostly be taught by) thousands of bright young university students from all over Asia. I have seen their accomplishments and heard many stories first-hand about young social entrepreneurs and what they are doing to improve the lives of citizens from their own countries and the region.

The ASEAN's youth issue does a great service by bringing together many fine stories celebrating the accomplishments of outstanding young minds in the region. The story of Angelo Casimiro's engineering projects, the Herli brothers' contributions toward helping to get struggling people united with mental service providers, Josefa Tauli's work on behalf of indigenous peoples, fresh voices in literature such as Dawn Lanuza (I just ordered her book, *I Must Belong Somewhere*), the articles on empowering women and of course the importance of music to lessen the negative waves of the pandemic in Widya Librianti's Coping with the Pandemic Through Music. The list goes on and on but I will end with some praise for the upbeat educational and friendship exchange JENESYS. Youth exchange is vital to the ASEAN region.

Although we can make the best of Zooming for now, I earnestly hope for more and more person-to-person exchange among youth in this region. So, thank you! All the creative people involved in creating *The ASEAN*. I am sure this periodical can inspire greater numbers of people to do bigger things with their lives.



PHILIP MATHEWS
FORMER ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-GENERAL, INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AND STRATEGIC STUDIES, MALAYSIA

An Informative Publication

The ASEAN is an informative magazine touching on current and relevant topics of interest not only to ASEAN countries but also to all who are interested in the state of the world. As the former head of the Environment Division of the Institute of International and Strategic Studies in Malaysia, I was particularly impressed with your issue on Climate Change (September 2020). I look forward to educating myself with future issues.



SUKUMA UTTARAK
COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT ASSISTANT, UNDP THAILAND

Expand Section and Write-up on ASEAN Culture

The overall structure looks good and the design looks clean, easy to read and catchy. My favourite part of the magazine is the Viewpoint. It's good to see how a senior management reflects their view on various issues.

It'd be even more interesting if the magazine could cover more on the cultural part by adding a small section of fun facts about ASEAN or creating a "what's happening around ASEAN calendar" to attract the reader to learn more about ASEAN culture. I saw on social media posts that you like to mention the important national days from each country. Why not get this featured also?



HO MANH TOAN
RESEARCHER, CENTRE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY SOCIAL RESEARCH, PHENIKAA UNIVERSITY, HA NOI, VIET NAM

Strive for Better Design and Solicit More Article Contributions from ASEAN Countries

Generally, *The ASEAN* magazine is beautifully designed and illustrated. However, I don't really like the current presentation of the content. The layout looks crowded so it's hard to skim through and get the important information. Perhaps a better spacing would help. Regarding the content, I think it can be better curated, with better focus on different countries.

Currently, I feel that *The ASEAN* is aiming for a neutral viewpoint. However, as a Vietnamese, I cannot say that I wholeheartedly relate with the neutral message of *The ASEAN*. Perhaps, the magazine can make use of a collaborator system in which writers from ASEAN can contribute their own writings, with specific focus on problems in each country but with lessons that the whole of ASEAN can learn from.

Another matter is the distribution of *The ASEAN*. Had my friend not informed me, perhaps I would never have known about its existence. Perhaps, an independent website with online content can help.

Overall, I think *The ASEAN* has great potential and it can be a great platform for ASEAN youth to voice their concerns, hopes, and wishes. Therefore, I think *The ASEAN* should aim higher and continue raising its standards. ■

Women's Voices We Heard

The ASEAN interviewed and featured many amazing women who are making their mark in their chosen fields and advocacies. They are building communities, contributing to solutions to the region's and world's most pressing problems, and inspiring others into action. We look back at the nuggets of wisdom and positivity they shared over the past year.



ASEAN IDENTITY

"ASEAN's relevance can only be achieved and maintained when our community has a deep understanding and awareness of ASEAN. Apart from bringing the benefit to the people, the relevance of ASEAN should bring benefit to the region and the world. By having one solid narrative on ASEAN identity, it will help us actualise ourselves more."

Indonesia's Foreign Minister **Retno Marsudi** on developing a narrative of ASEAN identity (May 2020)



TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

"The demand for qualified ICT workers is high in line with the fast-growing ICT sector, but there is a shortage of qualified workers in Indonesia who are ready to work. Many programmers that I interviewed couldn't code, so they needed more time to take coding training. The outdated curriculum that could not keep up with the industry's rapid growth was a factor that caused this shortage…Taking opportunity from the digital momentum, I built Markoding with the vision to address the skills mismatch by preparing the young with skills for their future."

Markoding founder **Amanda Simandjuntak** on teaching women and girls to code (February-March 2021)



Bamnang Creative Innovation co-founder **Seng Rothsethamony** on technological innovation (February-March 2021)

"Technology is growing in ASEAN, and young people in the region are quite tech-savvy. Unfortunately, most are still using it for entertainment only. I really hope ASEAN and other entities can help improve the digital literacy of the youth on how to use technology for other purposes, like education and business."

HEALTH

"Ultimately, COVAX is about providing equitable global access to COVID-19 vaccines, but it is also more than that: it is a model for international cooperation that shows governments can put aside national interests in the pursuit of a goal greater than any one of them could achieve on their own. We believe that the spirit of COVAX, the lessons we will learn, and the infrastructure and expertise we are building will help us be better prepared to respond to pandemics and other global emergencies in the future."

**In March 2021, Dr. Iweala began her five-year term as Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO). She is the first woman to serve as Director-General.*



Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance Board Chair **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala PhD*** on the global effort to develop COVID-19 vaccine and treatment (November-December 2020)



"I always believe that everybody should get access to treatment, whether you are rich, poor, white, black, or whatever. This is a basic human right…I try to teach communities to produce drugs by themselves, especially herbal medicines. It is important to produce drugs locally. People cannot rely on drug donation all the time. Once the donation is done, what are they going to do if they cannot produce drugs by themselves?"

Pharmacist and Ramon Magsaysay awardee **Krisana Kraisintu** on her lifelong mission to develop affordable medicines (July 2020)

"We still have a lot of work to do to improve our health system. The policymakers down to the people need to be more solid in responding to health emergencies in the future. It's also important to improve our information system, especially on health, so people won't be easily misled by fake news. We can also learn from the other ASEAN countries in responding to the health crises, and collaborate more to improve our health systems so that if we face another pandemic in the future, we all can have the same standards in responding to it."

Medical doctor **Disa Edralyn** on the health system (November-December 2020)





"Together with the Cancer Coalition Philippines, the ICANSERVE Foundation has appealed to pharmaceuticals to donate whatever they can to our patients—cancer medicines, supportive care like pain medicines, and nutritional products. We need COVID-19-safe facilities and standalone cancer facilities so cancer patients don't share the same entrances, the same CT scan, the same operating room as COVID-19 patients…The virus will be with us for some time so we need to create safe spaces."

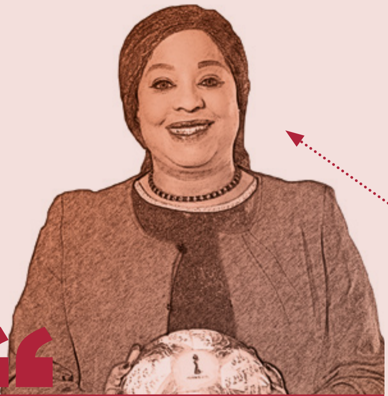
ICANSERVE Foundation co-founder **Kara Magsanoc-Alikpala** on caring for cancer patients in the midst of a pandemic (November-December 2020)



Right to Play Thailand Foundation Country Director **Phunyanuch Pattanotai** on the role of sports in a pandemic (February-March 2021)

SPORTS

"Building community resilience is key for ASEAN to thrive through the prolonged pandemic. COVID-19 kept children and youth away from schools and universities, and the uncertainties it has brought only added to their stress and anxiety. Sports and play can be a great tool for all of us to stay healthy and mentally strong."



FIFA Secretary General Fatma Samoura on FIFA's partnership with ASEAN (August 2020)

"The partnership covers a broad range of collaboration areas with a strong focus on education through the implementation of FIFA's Football for Schools Programme, which will aim to foster life skills and physical education through football for boys and girls in schools across the Southeast Asian region…Other areas of cooperation will be the promotion of child safeguarding in football, as well as the advancement of sports integrity via increased awareness raising of match manipulation and doping."

SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE ACTION

"Agriculture is considered one of the most unsustainable industries because it has a lot of greenhouse gas emissions, it pollutes a lot of areas, and it causes a lot of deforestation. But with sustainable and regenerative agriculture, we're integrating it into forests and towards sustaining land so that it's intrinsically sustainable."

Social entrepreneur and Cacao Project founder **Louise Mabulo** on shifting to sustainable agriculture (August 2020)





"Climate change mitigation and adaptation need not only come from urban and technology improvements. For example, UNEP is supporting efforts in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar to improve resilience to climate change by protecting, maintaining, and rehabilitating priority ecosystems. Reducing deforestation would significantly reduce emissions."

UN Under-Secretary-General and Environment Programme Executive Director **Inger Andersen** on solving environmental threats in ASEAN (September 2020)

"Global political commitment and societal will are critical to accelerate transition; to reduce by half carbon dioxide emission by 2030, reaching net zero around 2050… Yes, the countries in the (ASEAN) region are not the culprit for this global conundrum; but that is not the point. The point is that the countries in the region are poised to bear the greater brunt of the expected effects of global warming to 1.5°C…Hence, is not ratcheting up fair and ethical transformation efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C the way forward for the countries in the region?"

Joy Jacqueline Pereira, Principal Research Fellow of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Southeast Asia Disaster Prevention Research Initiative on building ASEAN's resilience to climate change (September 2020)



"Evidence is showing that many indigenous peoples have, since time immemorial, governed, managed, sustainably used, and conserved their territories and natural resources through indigenous and local knowledge and practices, rooted in our connectedness and reciprocity to our lands and waters that sustain us, protect us, are entrusted to us by our ancestors. There is therefore a crucial need for our policies and initiatives to respect, recognise and learn from indigenous knowledge and to urgently secure indigenous peoples' rights to lands and territories. This is something that will not just benefit indigenous peoples, but really the whole of society, who all rely on biodiversity."



Global Youth Biodiversity Network Steering Committee member **Josefa Cariño Tauli** on recognising the role of indigenous youth in conservation (February-March 2021)

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

"With the climate crisis upon us, the adverse impacts of drought will become even more severe if no actions are taken. ESCAP's subregional and country-level engagements seek to support governments to turn the cyclical and slow-onset nature of drought into an opportunity to take risk-informed measures to strengthen the capacity of institutions, sectors, and populations to adapt. We seek to ensure that policymakers have all the evidence and skills they need to make informed decisions that strengthen climate resilience through our intergovernmental platforms, policy research, and capacity building functions."



UN Under-Secretary-General and UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Executive Secretary **Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana** on addressing drought (October 2020)

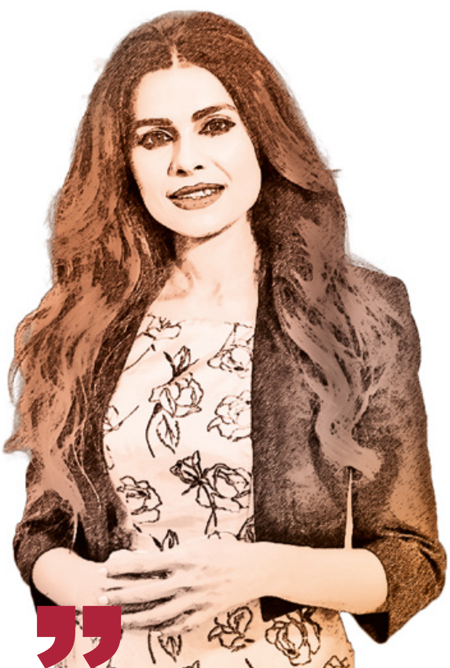


Development researcher and worker **Pimvadee Keaokiriya** on community involvement in disaster management (October 2020)

Through activities to prepare a community disaster risk reduction action plan, we hear about the local knowledge on how disasters could be addressed. Interviews conducted enable understanding on how past disasters have impacted the lives of people in these communities. They inform us on what would be appropriate for their communities, which then gets integrated into the plan. We also learn about initiatives taken such as the setup of a community watch group, which enables them to reduce their risks to future disaster."

GENDER EQUALITY

"It is also never too late to make a career change. Learning is lifelong, and the oldest person to join the recent degree in Nursing Studies cohort is 55 years old."



Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies assistant professor and ASEAN-US Science Prize for Women honourable mention **Shefaly Shorey** on launching a career in science (November-December 2020)



Former WHO Director-General and Former Norwegian Prime Minister **Gro Harlem Brundtland** on gender equality (September 2020)

"You cannot have sustainable development if women and girls are still subject to exclusion, discrimination, sexual assault, and violence. There are strong arguments for reviewing and reforming institutions and processes, particularly so the multilateral system better reflects the diversity of the human family and gives a voice to women, young people, and other marginalised groups in society. We also need sustained investment in education so a whole generation of young women and girls are not further marginalised after the pandemic has disrupted their schooling and often plunged their families into poverty."

"Employers need to understand that women put in 100 per cent at work, and also 100 per cent at home. They don't scale back."

University of Malaya professor and ASEAN-US Science Prize for Women winner **Yoke-Fun Chan** on changing gender stereotypes (November-December 2020)



Gender Equality
ASEAN Women Firsts

RECOGNITION OF WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE AND TO STAND FOR ELECTION, PER COUNTRY



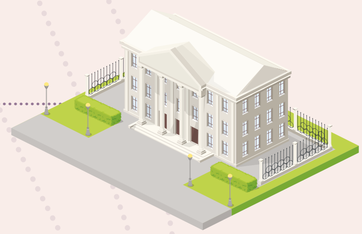
- Cambodia **1955**
- Indonesia **1945**
- Lao PDR **1958**
- Malaysia **1957**
- Myanmar **1948** (to vote) **1946** (to stand for election)*
- Philippines **1937**
- Singapore **1965****
- Thailand **1932**
- Viet Nam **1946**

** Prior to independence, under the British administration, women were granted the right to vote and stand for election under the Government of India Act of 1935 on the condition that they were literate, had an income, and paid taxes. These rights were extended to universal suffrage at independence.*

*** Prior to independence, under the British administration, women were granted the right to vote and stand for election on 18 July 1947. These rights were confirmed at independence.*

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union: Parline Database on National Parliaments, accessed from https://data.ipu.org on 8 April 2021

FIRST FEMALES IN PARLIAMENT, PER COUNTRY



- Cambodia **1958**
- Indonesia **1950**
- Lao PDR **1958**
- Malaysia **1959**
- Myanmar **1947**
- Philippines **1941**
- Singapore **1963**
- Thailand **1947**
- Viet Nam **1976**

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union: Parline Database on National Parliaments, accessed from https://data.ipu.org on 8 April 2021

FIRST FEMALE HEADS OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT, PER COUNTRY



- Philippines, **Corazon Aquino**, 1986
- Indonesia, **Megawati Sukarnoputri**, 2001
- Thailand, **Yingluck Shinawatra**, 2011
- Myanmar, **Aung San Suu Kyi**, 2016
- Singapore, **Halimah binti Yacob**, 2017
- Viet Nam, **Đặng Thị Ngọc Thịnh**, 2018



EARLIEST WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

Asociacion Feminista Filipina
(Philippine Feminist Association)
Philippines, 1905

Putri Mardika (Independent Women)
Indonesia, 1912

Burmese Women's Association
Myanmar, 1919

Women Solidarity Association
Thailand, 1932

Angkatan Wanita Sedar
(Conscious Women's Front)
Malaysia, 1945

Chinese Women's Association
(also called Chinese Ladies Association)
Singapore, 1915

Sources: *Singapore Women's Hall of Fame*, accessed from https://www.swhf.sg/milestones/ on 8 April 2021; *Feminism and Women's Movement in Malaysia*, accessed from https://sgp1.digitaloceanspaces.com/proletarian-library/books/118a794a37be8c9a3b8fcfe3dc491709.pdf on 8 April 2021; *Political Feminism and the Women's Movement in Thailand: Actors, Debates and Strategies*, accessed from http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/thailand/13363.pdf on 8 April 2021; *Feminism in Myanmar*, accessed from http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/myanmar/15624.pdf on 9 April 2021; *A Hundred Years of Feminism in Indonesia: An Analysis of Actors, Debates and Strategies*, accessed from http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/indonesien/13830.pdf on 9 April 2021; *Feminism and the Women's Movement in the Philippines: Struggles, Advances, and Challenges*, accessed from http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/philippinen/14072.pdf on 9 April 2021

FIRST SCHOOLS FOR GIRLS

Colegio de Santa Potenciana
Philippines, 1589

Chinese Girls' School
(renamed St. Margaret's School after WWII)
Singapore, 1842

Convent Light Street
(also called SMK Convent Lebuh Light)
Malaysia, 1852

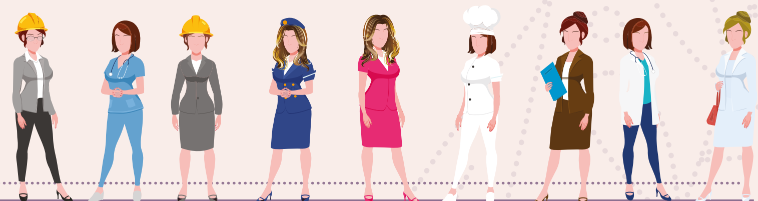
Wattana Wittaya Academy
Thailand, 1878

Kartini Schools
Indonesia, 1907

Nguyễn Thị Minh Khai High School
(also called Gia Long School)
Viet Nam, 1913

Sources: M.J. Perez and M.E. Pineda. (2016). The Role of Catholicism in the Development of Libraries in the Philippines, in *Libraries at the Heart of Dialogue of Cultures and Religions: History, Present, Future*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing; I. Lim. (n.d.). Maria Dyer, accessed from https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1343_2008-12-10.html?s=Ee%20Peng%20Liang on 5 May 2021; O. Mok. (2020). New Penang Private School in Convent Will Have its Own Entrance, says Infant Jesus Sisters, accessed from https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/09/04/new-penang-private-school-in-convent-will-have-its-own-entrance-says-infant/1900223 on 5 May 2021; . K. P. Watson. (1983). Missionary Influence on Education in Thailand c. 1660-1970, *Paedagogica Historica*, DOI: 10.1080/0030923830230107; Kartini Schools, Indonesia (2019), *Feminism in Minutes*, Quercus Books; P. Peycam. (2013). From the Social to the Political: 1920s Colonial Saigon as a "Space of Possibilities" In Vietnamese Consciousness, *Positions*, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1215/10679847-2144842

Women Trailblazers in Various Professions



Category	Name	Year	Country
First female doctor	Honoria Acosta-Sison	1909	Philippines
First female lawyer/barrister	Natividad Almeda-López	1914	Philippines
First female president	Corazon Aquino	1986	Philippines
First female astrophysicist	Mazlan Othman	1981	Malaysia
First Tony Award winner	Lea Salonga	1991	Philippines
First woman Nobel peace laureate from ASEAN	Aung San Suu Kyi	1991	Myanmar
First female Olympic gold medallist in ASEAN (also the only woman to hold the Olympic, World Championship, and all-England titles simultaneously)	Susi Susanti (badminton)	1992	Indonesia
First all women group to scale Mt. Everest	Singapore Women's Everest Team	2009	Singapore
First female parliamentarian	Hnin Mya	1932	Myanmar
First woman pilot in the military	Koh Chai Hong	1979	Singapore
First Pulitzer Prize winner	Esther Htusan	2016	Myanmar
First female head of a UN agency	Noeleen Heyzer	1994	Singapore

Viewpoint:

H.E. Ing Kanthaphavi

Minister of Women's Affairs, Cambodia
ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women (AMMW) Minister of Cambodia



Photo Credit: © Ministry of Women's Affairs, Cambodia

Minister Ing Kanthaphavi talks about ASEAN's major achievements over the past five years and explains the priorities and plans of the sector in the coming years. She also reflects on the changing employment landscape and how it impacts women in the workplace.

The ASEAN Committee on Women's (ACW) Work Plan for 2016–2020 outlined several priority areas, including gender mainstreaming in all the three pillars of ASEAN, eliminating violence against women, and promoting female leadership. How well did ACW achieve its target outcomes in these priority areas?
Kanthaphavi: During the past five years, ACW contributed actively to developing gender-responsive ASEAN declarations, statements, and regional plans of actions, which the ASEAN Leaders adopted. (Box 1)

The achievements in the implementation of ACW Work Plan 2016–2020 contributed to ASEAN Leaders' and people's awareness and acknowledgement that women are an untapped potential for ASEAN growth.

The empowerment of women and girls and gender equality are the prerequisites to building an inclusive and dynamic ASEAN community, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for all, and ensuring no one is left behind. ACW has achieved significant progress in six key thematic areas as follows: the promotion of women leadership, changing social norms and gender stereotypes, gender mainstreaming across the three ASEAN Community pillars, the elimination of violence against women, economic empowerment of women, and protection of women in vulnerable situations. (Box 2)

Can you elaborate on the priorities and plans of ACW in the next few years? What outcomes are you expecting to see?
Kanthaphavi: The ACW work plan was drafted through consultative and participatory processes with relevant ASEAN bodies and civil society organisations in the region. These are based on lessons learnt and current developments in ASEAN. These are the priority areas and their expected outcomes:

Gender Data and Statistics
Increased capacity of ASEAN and national statistics offices to generate and disseminate gender-responsive data to all users; and government, civil society, and the private sector can analyse and use gender-disaggregate data for policies and programmes, especially in the implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework or consolidated exit strategy from the COVID-19 pandemic, to achieve the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the SDGs, and leave no one behind.

(Box 1) DECLARATIONS, STATEMENTS AND REGIONAL PLANS OF ACTION ADOPTED BY ASEAN

- ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Women (2015)
- Regional Framework and Action Plan on Implementing the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection in ASEAN
- ASEAN Declaration on the Gender-Responsive Implementation of ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals (2017)
- Action Agenda on Mainstreaming Women Economic Empowerment in ASEAN (2017)
- Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN (2017)
- Declaration on Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society (2017)
- ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers
- ASEAN Declaration on the Role of Civil Service as a Catalyst for Achieving the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 (2017)

Gender Mainstreaming
Increased capacity of sectoral bodies in the three ASEAN pillars in the areas of gender analysis, gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting towards the achievement of the ASEAN Declaration on the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and SDGs.

Gender-responsive Climate and Disaster Resilience
Increased understanding of the importance of women's participation and leadership in disaster risk management, climate change adaptation planning, and decision-making at all levels to enhance the resilience of vulnerable people to disaster and climate change.

Gender Approach to Enhancing Safety and Protection of Women and Girls
Implementation of the comprehensive legal framework on violence against women and children in all ASEAN countries; changes in social norms and behaviour in ASEAN societies to reflect zero tolerance for all forms of violence against women and children; and better protection and timely recovery support services for victims of violence.

Women, Peace and Security
Implementation of the Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security, resulting in substantive participation of women in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, socio-economic recovery, and post-conflict situations.

Women's Economic Empowerment
Gender-responsive policies that value informal and unpaid care work and that foster equal access of women to education and skills development in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM), decent work, business opportunities for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) of women in the digital economy, and social protection; increased women's representation and leadership in executive and managerial positions; and strengthened public-private partnership for inclusive business and human resource development.

Gender Responsive Governance and Leadership
Increased number and meaningful participation of women in decision-making in public, private and political spheres.

At the regional level, we have seen promising achievements and trends as the first ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit was held last year, along with the incorporation of women as catalysts and agents of change as a key component of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework. With crucial support from the ASEAN Secretariat, ACW also launched the *ASEAN Gender Outlook*, a milestone step to strengthen our gender data and statistics capacity. I am looking forward to developing the Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security, operationalising the Regional Strategic Framework on Gender Mainstreaming, and engaging with the proactive ACW in addressing unpaid care and domestic work.

How will emerging changes in the employment landscape, such as artificial intelligence and automation, impact women in the workplace?
Kanthaphavi: It is impossible to predict how emerging, new, and disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things, big data analytics, advanced robotics, quantum computing, and new forms of automation will transform and shape work and economies around the globe. However, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) will bring about many opportunities and challenges to ASEAN. On the one hand, the 4IR holds the possibility of substantial productivity gains, future prosperity and increasing wealth, new jobs, connectivity for all, and many other still unknown opportunities. On the other hand, the 4IR might lead to job losses and disruptions to sectors and industries, increasing inequalities, political instability, and vulnerability to cyberattacks, as well as the end of "Factory Asia," according to a 2017 White Paper from the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

We have learned from previous industrial revolutions that technological innovation can bring about dramatic changes and disruptions to life as we know it. They can potentially transform, challenge and sometimes replace the existing and familiar modes of operation, order of things and ways of life. Only this time, the speed of these developments is unprecedented. As the WEF and ADB White Paper aptly put it:

> The Fourth Industrial Revolution will change everything. The new technologies and the interaction between them will offer new ways to create and consume, transform how we deliver and access public services, and enable new ways to communicate and govern. Almost every aspect of our lives will be touched: jobs, business models, industrial structures, social interactions, systems of governance. The Fourth Industrial Revolution will even challenge the very concept of what it means to be human.

What this means, first and foremost, is that we live in an era that requires fast, timely, and proactive adaptations and responses. Otherwise, opportunities may be lost. Governments, industries, enterprises, policymakers, and workers may be left behind and unprepared for the consequences. If opportunities can be seized, ASEAN economies can reap great benefits, and the region will prosper. Transformations due to 4IR will bring significant life changes for many workers, who have to navigate an unpredictable

(Box 2) ACW ACCOMPLISHMENTS PER THEMATIC AREA

Promotion of Women Leadership

- ACW Vietnam organised the first ASEAN Women's Leaders' Summit in November 2020 in which ASEAN Leaders emphasised women's crucial role in post-pandemic recovery.
- ACW Malaysia organised the International Conference on Women's Leaders' Voices in ASEAN in 2019 where representatives from ministries, small and medium enterprises, and non-government organisations highlighted the importance of promoting women's participation in decision-making.
- ACW has worked with ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters (ACCSM) to promote more inclusiveness in civil service.

Changing Social Norms and Gender Stereotypes

- ACW Vietnam organised a seminar on "Gender and Media Literacy in ASEAN" in 2018, with recommendations to combat harmful depictions of women and girls in the media and to engage men and boys as agents of change to advance gender equality.
- The first Conference on Gender Mainstreaming in Higher Education in ASEAN was organised in Manila in 2017.
- ACW cooperated with ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and the Protection of Women's Rights and Children's Rights (ACWC) and the Senior Officials Meeting on Education in organizing a regional meeting in Bangkok on the "Elimination of Gender Stereotypes and Sexist Language in Educational Materials at the Primary, Secondary and/ or Tertiary Levels."

Gender Mainstreaming across the Three ASEAN Community Pillars

- ACW Philippines organised three conferences on mainstreaming gender into the three ASEAN Community pillars, bringing Senior Officials to brainstorm ideas for initiatives related to gender mainstreaming within ASEAN.
- ACW and the Senior Labor Officials Meeting collaborated to mainstream gender into labour and employment policies and practices to promote decent work for all.
- ACW and ACWC endorsed the ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Framework 2021–2025 in February 2021, which will enable ASEAN to support Member States in undertaking further gender analysis and develop activities relevant to the specific context.
- ACW adopted the ASEAN Guidelines on Mainstreaming Gender Issues in Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation following the Inter-ministerial Workshop on gender issues in climate change and adaptation in Langkawi in 2015.
- ACW and ACWC issued the Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN adopted by the Leaders in Manila in 2017.
- ACW Cambodia and the ASEAN Secretariat jointly organised in Phnom Penh in 2017 the Regional Symposium on Implementing the Women, Peace, Security (WPS) Agenda in ASEAN, which facilitate relevant sectoral bodies' sharing of best practices and challenges related to the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 (WPS agenda).
- ACW and ACWC, with support from USAID-PROSPECT, produced the *ASEAN Regional Study on Women, Peace, Security* and launched it on the occasion of the International Women's Day on 8 March 2021, with evidence-based findings and recommendations to support ASEAN countries in enhancing women's active participation in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and related decision-making resolution and recovery.
- ACW, ASEAN Secretariat, and UN Women launched on 1 March 2021 the *ASEAN Gender Outlook: Achieving the SDGs for All and Leaving No Woman or Girl Behind* on 1 March 2021, which tracks ASEAN's progress towards gender equality and SDGs.

Elimination of Violence against Women

- The ACW-ACWC collaboration led to the launching of the *ASEAN Regional Guidelines on Violence against Women and Girls Data Collection and Use* in 2018, as well as to the development of the *Gender Sensitive Guideline for Handling Women Victims of Trafficking in Persons* in 2016.
- The ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Women has resulted in the development of adequate national legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms for effective prevention and protection services, towards the elimination of violence against women.

Economic Empowerment of Women

- ACW cooperated with the ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs' Network to organise the ASEAN Women's Business Conference in Manila in 2018, resulting in the drafting and subsequent adoption of the Action Agenda on Mainstreaming Women's Economic Empowerment in ASEAN, which aims to mainstream women's economic empowerment through innovation, trade, inclusive business, and human capital development.
- ACW worked with ACCSM on the project "Affirmative Action for Women in Civil Service and Mainstreaming the Action Agenda in Women Economic Empowerment in ASEAN Economic Community."

Protection and Empowerment of Women in Vulnerable Situations

- The third ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women in 2018 in Hanoi highlighted the need for targeted social protection for vulnerable groups, including women and girls, as this will contribute to reducing poverty, eliminate discrimination and inequality, and lead to empowerment and resilience.
- ACW participated in the Inter-Sectoral Dialogue: Scoping study on Strengthening and Empowerment of Women Migrant Workers in Crisis and Disaster Situation in Manila in 2017, leading to the adoption of the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers in November 2017.
- ACW provided inputs to the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its implementation plan, the exit strategy from the COVID-19 crisis, to ensure the impact on women and girls are addressed.

future and simultaneously face the threat of redundancy if they do not have the opportunity or means to adapt their skills.

These disruptions will mainly affect the women of ASEAN. Generally, women bear the brunt of economic disruptions. A 2020 Asia Foundation study, *The Future of Work Across ASEAN*, found that the new challenges of 4IR will intersect with the traditional challenges of gender equality and dynamics.

Overall, more women in ASEAN are employed in lower-skilled and lower-paying jobs than men, which has resulted in persistent gender wage gaps. A majority of women are employed in vulnerable sectors with limited access to benefits and social protection. Gender gaps in education have declined, but education attainment for women continues to lag compared to that of men (*Projected Gender Impact of the ASEAN Economic Community*, 2016). These issues and challenges are compounded by the fact that women contribute substantially to economic welfare through large amounts of unpaid care and domestic work in addition to work outside the home, leaving them hardly any time for upskilling activities.

Additionally, women are mainly on the wrong side of the digital divide. According to the 2020 Asia Foundation study, the gender digital divide threatens to keep beyond ASEAN women's reach the many possibilities and paths to prosperity that digital technologies offer. Women generally have lesser access to digital technology and the internet, and therefore have lower literacy and digital skills (*Connected Women: The Mobile Gender Gap Report*, 2019). Women face disadvantages in access to resources and opportunities for harnessing the potential of the digital transformation and are generally underrepresented in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) disciplines and careers (*The Future of Work Across ASEAN*, 2020), which in turn limits their possibilities to learn and contribute to the STEM disciplines, to shape STEM-related industries, and to participate in leadership and decision-making roles in the digital sector.

Developments in automation will be particularly challenging for women workers. Although studies have shown that more jobs will be created as a result of 4IR continuously shaping ASEAN's future (e.g. Oxford Economics and Cisco, 2018), other studies suggest that automation will put many jobs at risk. In 2016, ILO conducted a survey of the future of jobs in ASEAN-5—Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam—which comprises approximately 80 per cent of the entire ASEAN workforce. The study noted that "56 per cent of all employment in the ASEAN-5 is at high risk of displacement due to technology over the next decade or two" (p. 4). It also revealed that "in each of the ASEAN-5, women are more likely than men to be employed in an occupation at high risk of automation. Moreover, less-educated workers and employees earning lower wages face higher automation risk" (p. 4).

While risks and impacts certainly vary among the ASEAN countries, the ASEAN Community is very well aware that it must address the challenges posed by the 4IR while at the same time tap into the many potentials and opportunities that 4IR offers. ASEAN is also well aware that this has to go hand in hand with improving both education and labour market outcomes for women and drive further progress on women's entrepreneurship. In fact, during the ASEAN Leaders' Special Session at the 36th ASEAN Summit on Women's Empowerment in the Digital Age, held on 26 June 2020, ASEAN Leaders reiterated the importance of promoting gender equality and the empowerment of all women to realise an inclusive, people-oriented, people-centred ASEAN Community. They also underscored the importance of "enhancing the welfare and development of all women and children in ASEAN, improving their access to opportunities and responding to emerging challenges as a result of the rapid development of science and technology, in particular, the 4IR and the digital transformation." In particular, the Leaders were committed to increasing opportunities for women in frontier technologies and innovation, digital education, upskilling and reskilling, STEM education, financial inclusion, and MSMEs (Chairman's Press Statement on ASEAN Leaders' Special Session at the 36th ASEAN Summit on Women's Empowerment in the Digital Age, 2020).

In November 2020, during the ASEAN Women's Leaders' Summit on "Women's Role in Building a Cohesive, Dynamic, Sustainable and Inclusive ASEAN Community in a Post-COVID-19 World," ASEAN Leaders not only highlighted the significant and indispensable role and contributions of women to the socio-economic development and maintenance of peace and security throughout the world and in the ASEAN region but also their crucial role in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. They specifically "committed to place women's leadership and contributions at the heart of the recovery efforts, particularly in the implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan" (Chairman's Press Statement on ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit "Women's Role in Building a Cohesive, Dynamic, Sustainable and Inclusive ASEAN Community in a Post-COVID-19 World, 2020).

These are incredible milestones.

The Royal Government of Cambodia, which has always considered women as the backbone of the economy and society, has also placed gender equality and women's empowerment at the heart of both, COVID-19 recovery efforts and Cambodia's path towards a digital economy and 4IR. Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, the Prime Minister of Cambodia, a champion for gender equality and women's empowerment, understands the challenges Cambodian women face, especially in light of automation and digitalisation, during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis. He underscores that continuing to provide support to women, promoting women's economic empowerment, and advancing the role of women on every level are key priorities and smart investments, both in terms of maintaining socio-economic stability during the crisis, promoting economic recovery and growth in the post-crisis, and preparing for seizing the opportunities and benefits provided by the 4IR.

For ASEAN and Cambodia, the Prime Minister sees the following gender equality and women's empowerment priorities as essential for enhancing sustainable and dynamic social-economic development in the post-COVID-19 crisis (Keynote Address by Akka Bondit Sopheacha Aun Pornmoniroth, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Economy and Finance Representative of Samdech Techo Hun Sen, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia at the ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit), which is the foundation for inclusive development, shared prosperity and progress toward 4IR and digital economy:

a. Ensuring full and equal participation of women in decision-making at all levels by addressing all obstacles, including the culture of discrimination in political institutions.
b. Enhancing accountability mechanism for gender equality and improving relevant government institutions with effective means of monitoring the progress while ensuring sufficient provision of resources for this goal.
c. Increasing focus on human capital development and digitalisation, especially for young women, through the investment in education and skill development and addressing the gender gap in the fields of digital technology, education, and STEAM.
d. Continuing to promote women in the economy by fostering essential women MSMEs' business development services and strengthening vocational training programs.
e. Continuing to enhance financial inclusion and financial technology for women to increase awareness, access to financial services, and digital technology usage. ■

The ASEAN Leaders were committed to increasing opportunities for women in frontier technologies and innovation, digital education, upskilling and reskilling, STEM education, financial inclusion, and MSMEs.



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Transformational and Feminine Leadership

In praise of empathy, sensitivity, and authenticity in the workplace



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"Be a man." "Toughen up." These are phrases women often hear. From everyday life to the professional realm, we are reminded more often than needed to be equal to men. This has set us up to a fallacy that men and masculine qualities are the benchmarks for excellence and success in life.

In the workplace, how often do we see women try to adopt masculine traits, speaking "tough" to appear more confident at meetings, or enforcing carrot and stick approaches of the fiefdom era to reward and punish staff.

That is certainly not their fault. Society's failure to transform leadership paradigms and organisational cultures and make everyone understand that "to emulate men" is not the way forward.

Promoting women in decision-making and leadership roles has gained some traction in policymaking and practices, particularly pertaining to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. While it is encouraging, progress has been sluggish, and the understanding of what women's leadership means remains vague.

An illuminating study on women and leadership by KPMG, "Advancing the Future of Women in Business" (2019), suggests that women feel more pressure than men to prove themselves in corporate environments. Women also report feeling a greater need to adapt their leadership styles. While leaders, women and men, strive for authenticity, they pause at the idea of being perceived as overly empathetic or emotional, qualities that tend to be associated with weakness.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the new normal work arrangement have contributed significantly to the re-examination of leadership, resilience and adaptability of the organisation and individuals alike. The pandemic has warned us that adaptability is paramount to any organisation's growth, evolution process and mere survival. It has urged us that in times of crises where no one, including leaders in the organisation is exempted from its plight and peril, what we need is transformational and NOT transactional leadership.

Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership style in which leaders encourage, inspire, and motivate employees to innovate and create change that will help shape the future of the organisation. Transformational leaders establish themselves as role models by gaining their trust and confidence. Such leaders mentor and empower subordinates, encourage them to develop their full potential while establishing an emotional connection with the staff.

In these times of uncertainty and disruption, there is a pressing need for managers to lead with humility and empathy. Many of us struggle to work from home while caring for our health and families. Others are unable to be with loved ones due to limited mobility. This is not the time to exert hierarchy, rigidity, and punitive measures at work. Throughout history, women are told that they are too soft, kind and caring to be leaders, but the notion that someone who is not kind and caring can lead effectively is at odds with the current reality and its challenges.

We have learned and continue to learn that effective leaders do not emanate from one mold of command and control, although traditional organisations perpetutate this notion. Women, who manage to climb the leadership ladder, then have to comply with such a system. Gender equality and an appreciation for nuances are needed for leadership effectiveness and to perform well; leadership emergence is required to move up the ladder.

Being development-focused rather than goal-oriented, embracing limitations, fostering strength-based responsibilities and being flat in the way one structures and runs the team are not Achilles' heels. The same goes with wearing dresses and walking in heels in the work environment.



Both transformational and feminine leadership models are the fruits of trial and error. They carry an advocacy message for leaders, especially women, to nurture their qualities and find their own ways and express their own voices. While being construed as a management style characterised by more feminine quality, soft skills and behaviours such as empathy, effective communication, and democratic or team-styled work environment, feminine leadership is not only for females.
The management and leadership approach is a growing trend that has proven beneficial to organisations in face of adversity and at difficult junctures, especially those that vow for inclusiveness and sustainability for all.

Of course, transformational and feminine leadership may not replace all other forms of leadership, but they do help all of us rebalance our views of the world and our ways of work. They prompt us that equality is not just about allowing women to be in leadership positions but also about changing the rules of the game. These rules allow for a fundamental identity shift in the way we see ourselves as leaders, and the way others perceive us as leaders (or not).

For as long as we remember, feminine qualities have been disallowed and criticised in all aspects of masculine-dominated systems and structures.
Again, feminine qualities are not just for women. They are also for men who try to find their voices, for authenticity as they try to lead people through the same qualities.

We shall harness nuances, malleability and acceptability in 21st century leadership models that are conducive to equality and not hierarchy. We will promote people into leadership roles when they are competent, not just confident, when they are prolific, rather than political, and when they are authentic, not simply authoritative.
By doing so, we will achieve not only organisational objectives but also attain the higher values of empathy, sensitivity and humility that are endemic rather than foreign to the real ethos of leadership for both women and men. ■

Gender Equality Across the SDGs

A Statistical Overview for the ASEAN Region

1 NO POVERTY

ASEAN Member States have slashed poverty rates in the past decades, but women in the region are still likelier than men to live in poverty.

58% **of women** still **earn less than their partners.**

Women with children are worse off and in 2019, **maternity cash benefits** reached only **33% of women.**

2 ZERO HUNGER

Major nutrition gains were brought about by economic prosperity, but select groups of women are still at risk:

Women age **15-19** are among the most **vulnerable to anemia** and most likely to be **underweight.**

Women living in poorest rural households and remote provinces are 10 percentage points more likely than the average woman to be underweight.

Urban women are the most likely to be overweight, another measure of malnutrition

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

An estimated **90%** of deliveries in the region are now **attended by skilled personnel.** However, risks remain higher for women living in the poorest rural households, where **33% of births are unattended.**

COVID-19 is rolling back some of the SDG progress achieved to date. **More women than men experienced illness** (not necessarily COVID-19 related) since the spread of the virus, but only **70% of women were able to see a doctor.**

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Evidence shows that younger people are now completing higher levels of schooling. Only an estimated

4% of women and **3% of men** have **completed no education.** To achieve universal basic education, ASEAN Member States must reach ethnic minorities and women in remote areas.

5 GENDER EQUALITY

More women are now participating in decision making, but parity has not been reached:

20% of **parliament seats are occupied by women.**

Women make up **24%** of **middle and senior managers** in the private sector.

In the ASEAN region, child marriage rates are among the lowest in the world but efforts are needed to fully eliminate violence and harmful practices.

16% of girls still **marry before turning 18.**

9% of women and girls experienced physical and/or sexual **violence by an intimate partner** in the past 12 months.

COVID-19 has increased the unpaid domestic and care work burden. In ASEAN Member States, **30% of women noted increases in the intensity of domestic work** since the spread of the virus, compared to only **16% of men.**

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

An estimated **93million** people in the ASEAN region have **gained access to safe drinking water** since 2000.

Without it, women and girls often bear the burden of water collection, which in some cases can take up to **15hours** for a **single round trip.** Rural women spend the most time collecting water.

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

The rapid economic development in the ASEAN region has raised **energy demand by 80%.**

As a result, the region's reliance on fossil fuels has increased. This is affecting people's health and women's care burden, and putting pregnant women at risk.

Evidence shows that **92%** of those engaged in the **production of crude, petroleum and natural gas** are men – very few women see any profits.

Household energy consumption patterns in South-East Asia are also detrimental to women.

In 2018, an estimated **224million** people in ASEAN **lacked clean cooking fuels** and technologies. The poorest rural women are the most deprived in access to clean fuels in all countries.



Men are **11.5** times as likely as women to **be employed** in ASEAN Member States. Efforts should focus on promoting, among others, young women's engagement:

24% of young women are outside of education and employment, compared to **13% of young men.**

ASEAN's digital market has expanded threefold in the past three years, opening the door for a wide range of opportunities for digital work and remote work arrangements. In some countries, however, a digital divide still exists.

ASEAN is the fastest growing internet market in the world, with **125,000 new users joining the market** every day.

This offers tremendous oportunities, but most related jobs are occupied by men.

48% of researchers in ASEAN Member States are women, and only **45%** of **jobs in information services activities** are occupied by them. Female participation is important for new developments to meet women's needs.

ASEAN Member States have made substantial strides towards reducing gender inequalities, from reducing child marriage and maternal mortality, to enhancing women's access to education and participation in decision-making.

But income and location inequalities persist, with **Gini coefficients** ranging from **0.44** to **0.31**.

Rural women living in poor households are lagging the furthest behind for almost all indicators analysed.

Cities offer economic oportunities and challenges.

40% of urban residents live in slums, largely due to a lack of sufficient living area. Many slum dwellers also lack water and clean fuels.

36% of women slum residents cook with unclean fuels, compared with **15% of urban women non-slum dwellers.**

Support services are key for slum dwellers to overcome these challenges.

Both women and men play important roles in sustainable consumption.

Men are **7** times as likely as women to be **engaged in mining and quarrying**, a heavily polluting occupation.

More than **90% of women have the final say on small household purchases.**

Women depend largely on natural resources. Many employed women are engaged in agriculture: 64% in Lao PDR, 39% in Viet Nam and 34% in Cambodia. Others simply rely on natural resources when they cannot access assets.

28% of women live in households that primarily **use wood as cooking fuel.** Climate change, including aridity and flooding, is intensifying women's vulnerability, and increasing their water and firewood collection times.



Globally, the **share of women in the seafood industry** is **47%**. Women acount for up to **55% of workers** in the **pre and post fishing processes** in select ASEAN Member States.

Coastal tourism is key for the region. Tourism represents 18% of all exports in Thailand, and 9% in the Philippines. Protecting our oceans should be a key priority for ASEAN.

The ASEAN region sees the most alarming deforestation rates in the world. Land degradation has prompted urban migration on the part of men and a feminization of agriculture. However, over **85%** of **agricultural land holders** are men.

ASEAN Member States are among the world's most peaceful. In 2017, the region committed to advance the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda through the Joint Statement on Promoting WPS in ASEAN. The region also contributes to peacekeeping in other countries, although the personnel contributions remain below gender parity for all ASEAN Member States. Women peacekeepers make up **29%** of **individual police**, **21% of mission experts**, and only **5% of troops.**

In ASEAN Member States data is available for only **41% of gender-related SDG indicators.**

To promote its availability, countries must ensure national development strategies put this issue at their centre. Making financial and human resources available for data production and promoting gender data use for decision-making are critical.

Source: ASEAN and UN Women. (2021). ASEAN Gender Outlook, Achieving the SDGs for All and Leaving No Woman or Girl Behind (pp. 4-5). https://data.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/documents/Publications/ASEAN/ASEAN%20Gender%20Outlook_final.pdf

Viewpoint:

Mohammad Naciri

Regional Director, UN Women Asia and the Pacific



UN Women Asia and the Pacific Regional Director Mohammad Naciri discusses the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women, efforts to implement a gender-fair and gender-sensitive pandemic recovery plan, and the continuing partnership between UN Women and ASEAN. He also talks about the role of male leaders, allies, and champions in advancing the gender equality agenda.

Emerging data and narratives from the ground indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the burden on women and girls and may be reversing the global progress made on achieving gender inclusion and equality.

How and to what extent has the pandemic rolled back or eroded the gains made in empowering women and eliminating inequality, especially in the Southeast Asian region? How will this impact the SDG commitments of ASEAN countries and what can be done to manage the setback?

Naciri: The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the SDGs challenge the status quo in the way we define countries' success stories. It places gender equality and human rights at the heart of development, calling for a fundamental shift in how we live, work, and think. The COVID-19 pandemic has put unprecedented challenges towards

Photo Credit: © UN Women Asia and the Pacific

achieving the SDGs, but it also calls into question the growth and development models at the expense of environmental sustainability and widening inequalities everywhere, and Southeast Asia is not the exception.

In every crisis lies great opportunity. Despite its negative impact, the pandemic underlies a sense of urgency for us to course correct. More than ever, the COVID-19 crisis puts a magnifying glass into the unfinished business of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the most progressive blueprint for advancing gender equality and women's rights. In light of this, the pandemic reveals the critical importance of care work, which has been invisible and undervalued. All societies and economies, whether rich or poor, are dependent on care work to survive and thrive. COVID-19 has brought to the fore the critical need to address a very gendered structure of our economy.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, UN Women was among the first agencies to come up with the Rapid Assessment Surveys on the Consequences of COVID-19 that provide a clear evidence on the disproportionate impact on women and girls. For instance, women were more likely to note increases in unpaid care and domestic work. In most countries in Southeast Asia with available data, women in formal employment are more likely than men to say they now work less paid hours, while women in informal employment are more likely than men to say they lost their jobs.

Since the pandemic respects no borders and has affected the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, an integrated and multi-dimensional response is necessary to manage the setback. ASEAN provides a critical platform for regional and multilateral cooperation to address cross-border issues together with the UN and dialogue partners. Investing in gender-responsive social protection is more urgent than ever. We need to get people back to work, while recognising the importance of care work in the economy, as well as creating a pathway for environmentally sustainable development.

To build back better, a gender-sensitive post-pandemic recovery plan is advocated. What should be the key features of this plan?

Naciri: Let me highlight three key important features: gender data and analysis to inform policy decision-making, cross sectoral collaboration in the COVID-19 recovery plan, and finally gender-sensitive measures and action backed by strong indicators and resource allocation.

First of all, the plan must be grounded in a strong gender analysis as well as multi-dimensional approach to address challenges that are interrelated. We are proud to be a trusted partner of ASEAN in the journey to advance gender data and statistics to inform evidence-based policy decision-making. Much of our efforts to generate gender data and analysis of the COVID-19 impact can inform the implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework as well as national recovery plans.

For instance, while countries are focusing support on economic recovery through various stimulus packages to support businesses and unemployed people, more efforts are required to ensure better targeting of small businesses and informal workers, particularly in sectors where women workers tend to concentrate. UN Women's analysis of survey data and big data on digitalisation in Indonesia indicates that women-owned micro and small businesses are able to benefit more from leveraging digital platforms to cope with the crisis and to balance work and home responsibilities. Though they are unable to access social assistance support, especially those in the informal sector. Gender data can help to enhance targeting and prioritisation of beneficiaries in the social protection response to COVID-19.

> **More than ever, the COVID-19 crisis puts a magnifying glass into the unfinished business of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the most progressive blueprint for advancing gender equality and women's rights.**

In addition, the COVID-19 recovery will be further complicated with overlapping natural disasters given that ASEAN Member States are geographically located in one of the most disaster-prone regions of the world. Since COVID-19 has affected the management and use of natural resources, it is also critical for policy response to include the gender and environmental perspective. For instance, ensuring women's participation in natural resource management can help to conserve the region's remarkable biodiversity as well as ensure resilience through integrating gender into disaster preparedness, risk mitigation, and prevention of future crises.

Secondly, cross sectoral collaboration is key. We have seen encouraging progress towards gender mainstreaming and integration into ASEAN's sectoral priorities, such as disaster management. Lessons learned on key "features/enablers" can help to promote gender integration into a post-pandemic recovery plan. For example, the newly established Technical Working Group (TWG) on Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI), co-chaired by the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) and the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW), serves as a cross-sectoral platform to ensure commitments towards gender equality is translated into policy to enhance protection and empowerment of women and girls in the region. In line with the new ASEAN-UN Plan of Action 2021-2025, gender mainstreaming is placed as priority across all three community pillars, including new areas that are not traditionally engendered, such as environment and climate change.

Thirdly, we have also seen some important progress in this region for the adoption of gender-sensitive measures. Based on the UN Women and UNDP's COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, eight of the 10 ASEAN Member States have already adopted policy measures for COVID-19 response or recovery that address violence against women. Nevertheless, measures to target women's economic security have been adopted only in four ASEAN Member States, while measures to directly support unpaid care work have been adopted in three. So, there is definitely room to do more.

To ensure that commitment in policy and plans are translated into action, we need **gender-relevant indicators** to track progress towards **gender-sensitive post-pandemic recovery**. Simultaneously, dedicated **investment to close resource gaps** are needed to achieve gender equality. ASEAN together with the UN and dialogue partners can pull resources together to advance these efforts. Some concrete examples of integrating women and girls in COVID-19 recovery can be found in our recent report, Standing Up to the Challenge: Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Asia and the Pacific.



One significant pattern that surfaced during the past year is that countries and communities with the best COVID-19 response were led by women. What do you think accounts for this? What can be done to increase female leadership and make sure that women are represented in all levels of decision-making in the region?
Naciri: We are pleased to see increasing recognition of women's leadership in the COVID-19 response. Notably, the power of collaborative and empathetic leadership is key to diversity of ideas and flexibility that is much needed in response to the crises, especially the face of the unknown and uncertainties.

Yet, women are still underrepresented in the COVID-19 response in this region. According to the UNDP-UN Women's Global Gender Response Tracker, across 11 COVID-19 task forces in eight ASEAN Member States, where data was available, women represent only 25 per cent (or less) in these COVID-19 task forces. Three out of 11 do not have women representation at all. UN Women believes that more diverse representation of women and men is important to ensure that specific needs of the marginalised groups, especially women and girls, can be included in the development, planning and budgeting of COVID-19 response and recovery.

In 2020, we have seen significant momentum for women's leadership in ASEAN, including at the ASEAN Special Summit Session on Women's Empowerment in Digital Age, Meeting of ASEAN Women Parliamentarians at the ASEAN Inter Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), and the first ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit. The ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework has also put strong emphasis on gender equality as the cross-cutting priorities.

UN Women has been advocating for women's participation and leadership in policy decision-making, including a wide range of measures, from addressing unpaid care and domestic responsibilities to promoting temporary special measures and social norm change. Building capacity, knowledge exchange and peer to peer support among today and tomorrow's women's leaders in the region will be an important step forward.

Similarly, convening and building strategic partnerships, including engagement of men and boys are equally critical. In addition, harnessing the existing network of gender equality institutions and mechanisms is important to raise public awareness as well as advocating for changes in policy and practice.

UN Women has partnered with ASEAN on the production of two recent landmark studies, the *ASEAN Gender Outlook* and the *ASEAN Regional Study on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)*.

The *ASEAN Gender Outlook* points to gaps in sex-disaggregated data in many SDG areas which create an incomplete picture of women's well-being and ongoing challenges and deprivations. What are the most concerning/pressing data gaps that countries in the region should prioritise and address?
Naciri: ASEAN has made substantial progress towards achieving the SDGs in recent years. However, data gaps might have obscured the efforts required to fulfil the promise of leaving no one behind. By showcasing new analysis, the ASEAN Gender Outlook points out that women living in poor households and rural areas, especially those belonging to minority ethnicities, are further from achieving each of the SDGs, compared to the average population in the region. With clearer data and evidence, we hope that countries can put policies in place to better target women and girls of the marginalised groups.

Nevertheless, enormous gender data gaps remain in the environment-related SDGs. Prioritising data production in this area will accelerate progress towards achieving gender equality across the SDGs as a whole.

Photo Credit: © UN Women Asia and the Pacific

For instance, the publication shows evidence that women in rural areas are more likely to be in charge of collecting water and fuel, breathe unhealthy air at home and be disproportionately affected by climate change. Yet, women have relatively less control and ownership of land and natural resources, which makes them less resilient to shocks, such as natural disasters. Measuring women's contribution to natural resource management and biodiversity conservation can provide essential clues to advance economic, social and environmental progress. As the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted, there are enormous connections between environmental sustainability and human well-being. Filling these gender-environment data gaps should be a key priority for sustainable development.

Last but not least, the ASEAN regional platforms can be leveraged to ensure that Member States are able to exchange good practices, expertise, and lessons that can be shared across the region. UN Women is looking forward to supporting ASEAN to enhance South-South Cooperation to promote gender and data and statistics for monitoring the SDGs.

The *ASEAN Regional Study on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)* raised a number of recommendations at the national and regional levels. How do these recommendations intersect with the WPS agenda of UN Women and what are the possible areas of collaboration going forward?

Naciri: The ASEAN Regional Study on WPS is the first regional flagship publication that examines the development and implementation of WPS in the context of ASEAN and taking into account the effects of the pandemic. The WPS agenda has never been more relevant than during the COVID-19 crisis. Women have been frontline responders to the pandemic that has a spillover impact beyond health and the economic downturn. It has threatened to destabilise social cohesion. In and of itself, the crisis is a threat to international peace and security. The pandemic is also a conflict multiplier, and women's roles in preventing conflict and in responding to the health crisis become even more critical.

Owned and led by ASEAN, the study has helped to consolidate good practices and lessons learned on WPS, including key recommendations that have emerged from ASEAN experiences and context to pave the way forward. It provides a strong foundation to establish a common understanding on WPS and how it has been localised at the regional and national levels within the region. We are very pleased to be a strong partner of ASEAN in this important journey towards advancing the WPS agenda, particularly in support of ASEAN's vision to work towards establishing the **Regional Plan of Action (RPA) on WPS**. This will also inform areas of priority for implementation of WPS in the region.

Building on the established collaboration between ASEAN and the UN, the new ASEAN-UN Plan of Action 2021-2025 includes multiple areas in which technical expertise from the UN Women and UN partners can be mobilised in support of ASEAN's efforts to advance the WPS agenda. This includes support to mainstream gender inclusive conflict prevention, including prevention of violent extremism as well as capacity building support to ASEAN Women for Peace Registry to promote the role of women in peace mediation and processes, and further strengthen women peacekeepers from ASEAN Member States deployed to UN peace operations. In close collaboration with ASEAN, UN and dialogue partners, UN Women is very keen to provide technical support to ASEAN to integrate gender into implementing the RPA to Counter and Prevent the Rise of Radicalization and Violent Extremism 2019–2025.

Gender equality and empowerment will succeed if more men share this vision and step up to help advocate for change. Are you seeing this development in Southeast Asia? What insights can you give about your own role as a male advocate of UN Women's gender equality and other agenda in the region?

Naciri: I proudly call myself a male Muslim feminist. Since early age, I have been taught to respect women and have had a number of female role models growing up. I truly believe that gender equality and empowerment of women will transform the world. Everyone will win when we come together and build a more equitable, inclusive and peaceful society that values equal opportunities for women and men, girls and boys. We will all be stronger if everyone can thrive and fulfil their potential. Women's leadership and contribution are invaluable to society and we have seen this first-hand during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am very encouraged to see more and more recognition of this in Southeast Asia. I am even more hopeful for the younger generation in the ASEAN region, who have been enthusiastically engaged in the Generation Equality Forum and propel us towards gender equality.

Breaking up the gender stereotype is not only beneficial for women, but also for men to be liberated from an immense societal pressure and expectations that they need to be the sole provider, protector, and the ones who lead. Sharing the space in collaboration and partnership between women and men will create stronger family units that help to build a solid foundation for resilient communities and nations. Ultimately, we cannot hope for change without engaging men and boys to advocate for this agenda, and to understand that this is not a threat to their leadership and positions in the society. Rather, everyone has even more to gain when we have greater diversity in leadership and decision making. So I would like to encourage male leaders, allies, and champions in ASEAN to join me in this effort. ■

Rapid Assessment Surveys on the Consequences of COVID-19
https://data.unwomen.org/publications/unlocking-lockdown-gendered-effects-covid-19-achieving-sdgs-asia-and-pacific

Analysis of survey data and big data on digitalization in Indonesia
https://data.unwomen.org/publications/leveraging-digitalization-indonesia-case-study

Global Gender Response Tracker
https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/#:~:text=It%20analyzes%20which%20of%20the,sensitive%20COVID-19%20policy%20response.

Standing Up to the Challenge: Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Asia and the Pacific
https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/02/standing-up-to-the-challenge-response-to-the-covid-19-pandemic-in-asia-and-the-pacific

ASEAN Gender Outlook
https://data.unwomen.org/publications/asean-gender-outlook

Viewpoint:

Mari Elka Pangestu, PhD

Managing Director of Development Policy and Partnerships, The World Bank

Dr. Mari Elka Pangestu addresses issues of power, representation, and equality. Before joining the World Bank as a managing director in 2020, she held various leadership positions in the Indonesian government, including as Minister of Trade (2004-2011) and as Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy (2011-2014).



Photo Credit: © The World Bank

Global statistics on gender show an increasing number of women holding executive positions and political power. To what factors do you attribute this positive change?

Pangestu: I see it more as an ongoing process. In Southeast Asia, we've had women leaders at the highest level—Megawati Sukarnoputri, Corazon Aquino, to name a few—and also at the ministerial level. I can only speak for my own country Indonesia, but the inclusion of women was part of the whole democratisation process. Under President Megawati, political parties had to meet a quota, where 30 per cent of candidates for parliament had to be women. Then, there was a push to put women in substantive positions, not just in women's affairs. President Yudhoyono appointed women to two very key portfolios—finance and trade. It broke the barrier, showing that women can deliver well in important positions, and was followed by the subsequent president who had even more women ministers, including Foreign Affairs. Across the region today, you see women as ministers. Many of these leaders have come into their positions on merit, technocratic ability and performance.

How can this momentum be accelerated to ensure that women are represented at all levels of decision-making, especially in Southeast Asia?

Pangestu: There has to be the political will to involve women at all levels of decision-making, down to the village level. When you're designing a policy, you have to think about the gender dimension. Applying this *gender lens* is what we are doing at the World Bank and what I also did when I was in government.

How do you make sure this happens? You need to institute it in the processes that you have, then enforce it effectively. Let me share one of my favourite examples.

When I was a minister of trade, I had to revitalise the traditional market. After visiting many of them, I noticed that 90 per cent of the traders and the majority of the shoppers were women. I also saw young children running around the market while their mothers were working. But every market was designed in the same cookie-cutter manner. So, we changed the design to meet requirements for women—more toilets with space for breastfeeding, and a child care centre within the market. These became profit centres because users would pay. Applying a gender lens means you really need to think things through, be committed, then implement.

Support systems are also very important, which will help more women enter leadership positions. I was impressed with former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who emphasised that equal pay, childcare, and family leave are not just women's issues but also economic ones. There is a *funnel effect* when it comes to women who fall out before reaching top levels of management. Part of this is due to unfairness in how promotions are handled and lack of adequate support systems for work-life balance as we go up the career ladder. Promotion criteria need to have flexibilities built-in for womens' situations, and there needs to be better support for women to balance work, and childcare and family responsibilities. How we involve men is also important, such as providing not just maternity but also paternity leave.

You have served as a Cabinet Minister for 10 years and are now occupying a senior management position at World Bank. What important leadership lessons have you learned that are unique to being a woman leader from Southeast Asia?

Pangestu: There is an unconscious bias that persists, perhaps even more so in the Asian context, that it's negative for a woman to be ambitious and decisive. You need to manage that and show that you can lead, but that doesn't mean you have to be aggressive. You can be a good leader by having empathy while firm in your decision-making. I also think listening is very important in a leader, especially in a democracy. You need to listen well and understand different views, then come up with a decision.

> **Women are also good at multitasking. I always say that my brain is divided into ten—from discussions at work to children and homework. These are all attributes of good leaders.**

I heard recently that one reason Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, was able to succeed as a politician is because she had five children, who she had to negotiate with to maintain peace in the family. This is a good point. Women often have to manage families and multiple aspects of daily life. Maybe this helps us become better managers of different viewpoints. Women are also good at multitasking. I always say that my brain is divided into ten—from discussions at work to children and homework. These are all attributes of good leaders.

Have you ever experienced bias or discrimination as you rise up in your career (e.g. pay gap, unfavourable gender policies, sexism, racism)? How did you handle it?

Pangestu: I am a triple minority—a woman, ethnic Chinese and Catholic in a majority Muslim country. I did face bias and discrimination, which I managed by showing that I am as nationalist as anyone else. Another dimension is that I lived and studied abroad for 20 years and had to adjust to circumstances coming back home as a young woman. I am quite used to being the "odd person out" in any situation, but I've learned to survive through observation. You have to observe to understand norms and be respectful, then adjust to reduce suspicion or biases that people may have against you because you are from a different background. But you don't want to adjust to the point where you lose your own identity. One thing I learned early on is that you can deal with these issues with an open mind, and if you show respect and sincerity, you can also earn respect and trust. You also have to be patient because it takes time to get to that point, but you have to be the one to take the first step to begin the conversation and to understand each other's perspectives.

How are you able to manage a work-life balance? What support do woman need to achieve this?

Pangestu: There's no right or wrong answer to work-life balance, but don't believe the fairy tale that you can have it all, because you really can't. You'll always feel a level of guilt that you didn't attend your child's concert or whatever else. You need to balance it as best you can, manage the stress that comes with it and ensure that your child or spouse has the means to communicate with you, no matter how busy you are. It's much easier if you have a network of extended family and friends. One important network is the parents of your children's friends. They can alert you and tell you to pay special attention when something is wrong, such as when your child broke up with a girlfriend or other matters. You need these alerts to know what's going on.

What advice can you give to Southeast Asian women aspiring to break the glass ceiling or be in leadership positions?

Pangestu: One is to always push yourself beyond your comfort zone. I was a bit of an eager beaver which helped me rise throughout my career. Have the confidence to take on a task and show that you can deliver, even if you've never done it before. But remember that it's not about your personal ability to deliver or getting credit. It's about your ability to work with others, to collaborate and bring others along, which in turn helps you to build a network. I'm a great believer in networks. When they need you, offer help or advice, and there will come a time when you may need to call on them. That's how I was able to survive!

Another is mentoring. Especially when you're young, look for good mentors who will look out for you and help you. Good mentors can help open doors, tell you whether you are doing something right or wrong, and give you good advice. Being confident is also important. Many women have self-esteem and confidence problems, but you can assert your opinion without being aggressive. Make sure that



your opinion is well-substantiated, and people will listen to you because you have the evidence or your argument is well thought through.

What are World Bank's current initiatives to empower women, especially in response to COVID-19? Can you elaborate on its recent venture to support women-led enterprises?

Pangestu: Women's economic empowerment is important as a fundamental human right, but it's also critical to achieve the kind of development that we envision in the post-COVID-19 world—a development that is green, resilient, and inclusive—especially since this pandemic has disproportionately affected women.

The World Bank Group's gender equality strategy focuses on four key areas where countries and companies can focus on investments: health and education; jobs; ownership and control of land, housing and bank accounts; and voice and agency. The majority of our operations and strategies now aim to close specific gender gaps through analysis, smart design in interventions, and monitoring and evaluation of our work.

In our projects responding to COVID-19, we are taking care to consider the different impacts of the pandemic on men and women. Women and girls are experiencing disruptions to reproductive health services in some countries. School closures may put girls at a higher risk of not returning, limiting their learning and future opportunities. Women-owned and -led micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have closed or seen higher sales and profit losses than male-owned firms. According to recent research covering 48 countries, the difference in the rate of work stoppage is seven percentage points higher for women than for men.

Looking forward, addressing the structural barriers that have limited opportunities for women and girls pre-pandemic will create a stronger and more resilient recovery. This includes expanding social safety nets and building in economic inclusion, expanding the availability of childcare, and addressing gender-based violence and its underlying causes. A legal environment that encourages and incentivises women's work can create economic opportunities and make women more resilient not only in the face of crisis but throughout their lives and careers. Our Women, Business and the Law programme analyses laws and regulations affecting women's economic inclusion in 190 economies to inform policy reforms that will advance women's economic empowerment.

In terms of support for women-led enterprises, we host the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi), which was founded in 2017. It brings together 14 governments that have contributed over 350 million US dollars, six multilateral development banks that serve as implementing partners, and a variety of public and private sector actors.

How do you see emerging changes in the employment landscape, such as artificial intelligence and automation, impacting women's leadership?

Pangestu: I think the answer is two-fold. We have to make sure that the digital revolution is an inclusive process that empowers women. Accelerating the digitalisation of government and private sector payment platforms and services will reduce women's information and mobility constraints. This includes addressing barriers to access, affordability, knowledge and skills, safety and security, as well as making relevant content, products, and services more available to women. Digitalisation can be a game-changer for women if they are included front and centre in design. When the services sector is digitally enabled, it can make it possible for more women to work from home. Digital skills and automation can support women in continuing to be part of the workforce, which can better prepare them for promotions and leadership positions. ■



Conversations

Three remarkable women share their life-changing stories and the paths they forged in pursuing the professions and causes they love.

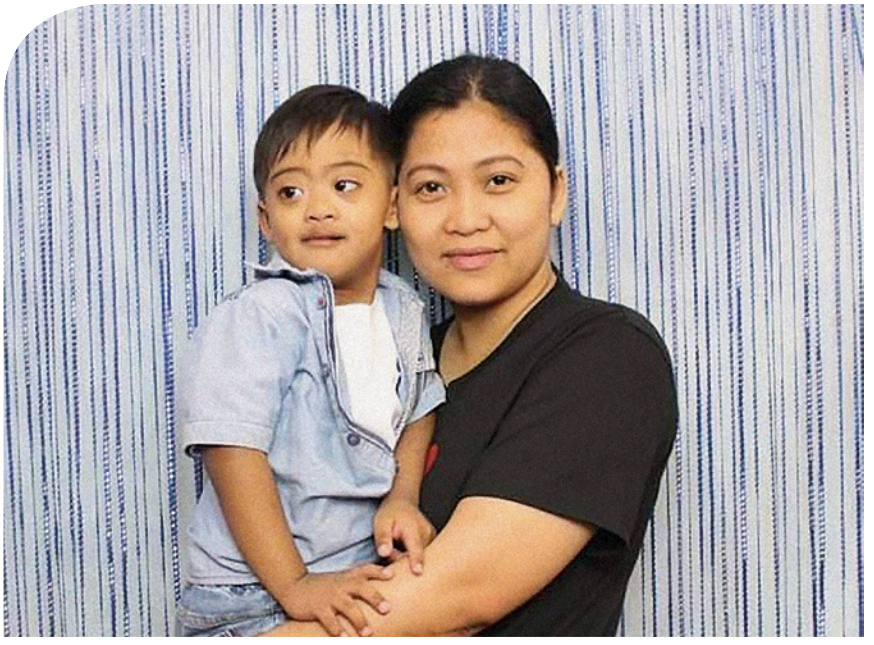
Photo Credit: © Silentgunman/Shutterstock

Janice Lopez

Migrant Worker. Mother. Advocate for Children with Special Needs

Forty-year-old Janice Lopez has worked for 14 years in Qatar as a retail industry administrative executive. Like millions of other Filipinos, Janice sought better employment overseas to provide for her family back home.

In 2015, she had a son, Jaden, and left him in the care of her family in the Philippines. He was later diagnosed with Down Syndrome and a congenital heart defect. Janice needed to continue working abroad to care for her son. Despite the financial and emotional challenges, she has taken care of many other children with special needs like Jaden too.



Janice with her son Jaden

"I left Jaden when he was two months old and went back to work abroad. I had no idea about his condition until he was born and hospitalised for more than one month due to congenital heart disease. I was still in denial, and I was overwhelmed after witnessing him being revived at the hospital. I realised that his present condition was very serious. I spent all my savings. I was left heavily in debt, so I needed to do something. All I was thinking at that time was earning money and making sure I could provide for all his needs, including for very expensive open-heart surgery. I still remember I was at the immigration desk at the airport, and I froze, wondering if I should go or not. I was miserable for the entire 10-hour flight.

"Since the day that I left him to work abroad, I cry every single day. It's really hard to overcome homesickness, especially now that it's been almost two years since I haven't seen him because of the COVID-19 pandemic. I feel sad and heartbroken when I'm idle. Rather than being miserable, I make use of this time by doing what I love and how I may help others. Since I'm not capable of assisting financially, I share awareness about children with Down Syndrome and children diagnosed with congenital heart disease. Jaden is my best example, a living testimony. By sharing our journey with others, I know we are saving lives.

"When I already understood and absorbed Jaden's diagnosis, I know I had to step in and do something within our Down Syndrome community. So, I started Jaden and Friends (JAF) in 2017, right after Jaden's open-heart surgery. I started several initiatives, Preloved Strollers, Diaper Drive, Blood Donation Drive and Happy Hearts Project, using social media as a tool since I work overseas. I always made time to work on this on my days off and free time. I don't have the exact numbers, but roughly around 150 preloved strollers were given away, and more than 300 children underwent heart surgeries nationwide. I did all the communication with patients' families, with doctors, as well as sponsors. Those who execute these are my volunteer friends in the Philippines and fellow parents who pay it forward after their children received their happy hearts.

"Half of the babies born with Down Syndrome have congenital heart defects. I witnessed many children died because they were not given a chance to have healthy hearts due to financial constraints. I know it's a fact that they are not a priority under charity programs. Too often, they face stigma, discrimination, and exclusion. Everyone has the right to health and equal access to quality health care, and this is what I rally for and advocate. I am blessed that I had generous donors for Jaden's operation, but I was devastated and hopeless before I got help. Jaden was oxygen-dependent for around seven months, and it was heartbreaking to see him unwell and bedridden. Now that he's ok, I want to share our struggles and

Photo Credit: © Janice Lopez

winning battles with many others and do something remarkable and noble for our Down Syndrome community.

"It has now been a year since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has claimed millions of lives and changed our lives in many ways. I usually go home for vacation two or three times a year, and I haven't seen my family in more than a year. I am very fortunate to be still employed, so I focus mainly on working hard instead of worrying and overthinking. Now with JAF, we had a few patients who died since the lockdown happened on March 17 last year because they were not given a chance to undergo surgeries. These patients were already scheduled for their heart operations, but the Department of Health had to suspend elective surgeries because of the pandemic. It was heartbreaking.

"I remember one of those kids was Wendell. He's 16 years old and dreamed of being an engineer someday; he was so happy that our organisation was helping him with the operation. He was supposed to undergo the surgery five days after the lockdown, but he died two weeks later due to cardiac arrest since it was cancelled. There were a few more kids like him. I was crying, but there's nothing else I can do but to pray. We shared the sentiments with our happy heart doctors, so they pushed on with the operations, and they resumed after almost two months.

"There were many challenges, and we had to rent a two-bedroom condominium situated near the hospital that serves as a halfway house for patients who don't have a place to stay. Even for those who have relatives in Manila, no one would welcome them into their homes for their health and safety. They are afraid that if they accept them in their house, they will catch the virus since our patients will mostly go in and out of the hospital, and most of our patients are indigent and cannot afford to rent a hotel on a daily basis. That's why we decided to rent a condo for our patients' convenience and safety, and this is free for them.

"Another challenge is blood donors. A child who will undergo open-heart surgery needs blood transfusions. The blood bank has insufficient supplies; volunteer donors are afraid to visit hospitals, so I came up with another Blood Donation Drive project. Thankfully, with the support of individuals and volunteers, blood heroes have been incredibly amazing. I am so grateful for all these unsung heroes. The next challenge is to get donations. It's hard to raise funds because many businesses have closed down. Many have no income because they lost their jobs, and the cost of heart operations are high. Thankfully, in partnership with individuals and with the support of Government Guarantee Letters, we saved 142 precious lives in 2020.

"It is Jaden who keeps me going. I am blessed with many strengths as a woman, an overseas Filipino worker, an advocate and a mother. My greatest strength is having faith in God, for I know he is the only one who has my back. I just want to be with my son, to be together and travel together. I wish to live long to take care of Jaden and JAF to continue raising awareness about children with Down Syndrome and those with congenital heart disease, inspiring others and saving lives.

"I'm a mother who will do everything for her child. I had to sacrifice being away to work so I can provide for his needs. Kids with Down Syndrome have a lot of associated health issues. He underwent open-heart surgery, eye laser surgery, twice oral rehabilitation and hopefully, I can start with his hearing issues, as his doctor advised him to use a hearing aid. I wish I was there to take care of him. This is the sacrifice that I need to face while being away. My only regret was not being able to enjoy motherhood with him when he was a baby. I pray that Jaden will always be healthy because being away when he gets sick drives me crazy. I will always be proud of him. Whatever he wants in the future, I will support him and be his number one fan. I will be here to continue advocating for you, Jaden, and continue inspiring others. Jaden and Friends Inc will be Jaden's legacy, and that people will never forget him, a child with Down Syndrome who inspires many.

"I hope ASEAN can promote that children with special needs deserve to be raised in a society that cares for their health and well-being. Provide opportunities for healthcare assistance and subsidy for indigent patients and make it legally mandated. In these difficult times, as a woman and a mother, I also need support for mental health, depression, anxiety, and taking care of oneself during a pandemic." Learn more about Janice's work *https://jadenandfriends.com/* ■

Janice started JadenAndFriendsInc as a support group in 2017. With the generous help of doctors, donors and organisations, the group has helped hundreds of children get much-needed heart surgeries and medical care



Photo Credit: © Janice Lopez

Interviewed by Mary Kathleen Quiano-Castro. The conversation has been edited and condensed for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.

Ha Anh Phuong
Innovative Educator

Known as the “4.0 innovative teacher” in Viet Nam, English language teacher Ha Anh Phuong introduces the use of technology to improve her students’ command of English. She employs a borderless classroom model to get her students engaged with students from other countries through various online platforms.

Phuong, who pursued her master’s degree in English at Hanoi University, also teaches through local TV shows and runs her own YouTube channel. She was among the top 10 finalists of Global Teacher Prize 2020, and in 2019, she was awarded the Innovative and Creative Teacher Prize by Viet Nam’s Department of Education and Training.



With the help of technology, Phuong empowers her students to improve their language skills

Photo Credit: © Ha Anh Phuong

“When I was eight years old, I watched a Vietnamese documentary about a primary school teacher who goes beyond a teacher’s role; visiting homes located along dangerous mountain paths to persuade parents to allow their kids to go to school rather than work in the mountains or stay at home to take care of siblings. The documentary really sparked an interest in me to become a teacher, and becoming an English teacher is the most realistic way to help students improve their lives and connect to the world. I am an ethnic minority, so I can understand the situation. After completing my master’s degree, I decided to return home in 2016 although I just received a good offer to work at a company in the capital.

“I teach at Huong Can High School; it’s located in a mountainous area in Phu Tho Province, northern Viet Nam, where more than 90 per cent of the students are ethnic minority, aged 15 to 18. Most of their parents are farmers and some work for the government. Students from poor and underprivileged families are exempted from paying the school tuition fees, and the rest only pay very low tuition fees. Despite their economic situation and geographical condition, the students are very hardworking. They have high hopes of getting a good education, a steady job, and a good income.

“I use a borderless classroom model where my students can connect virtually with foreign teachers and students in other countries. Through this method, we have gone beyond our village, seeing and understanding the beauty of the outside world with the help of technology. We have been travelling to 46 countries, connected with different

"In the future, I hope ASEAN can have a teacher community where teachers from all ASEAN countries can collaborate on various projects, exchange expertise, and learn more from each other."

schools from around the world, and worked together on various projects to improve their skills.

"One of our projects was making bamboo straws that don't get mouldy. They must think of ways to make such straws, so they talked to the experts and companies in Viet Nam to learn more about the techniques using available resources around them. The bamboo straws were then distributed to the local people and presented in our virtual classes. Another project was on healthy internet use. It's very important for students to know how to stay safe on the internet and deal with cyberbullying. We have connected with students from 20 countries to discuss this issue. We came out with a guidebook and free webinar to help prevent cyberbullying. I also created a game-based teaching method, turning a potentially boring grammar lesson into an exciting English language class.

"Learning English is not simply learning a language; it's also learning about the whole world. I'm so proud to say that the students are now more confident when they speak English to interact with people from other countries, and 100 per cent of them pass the national final exams. Their understanding of intercultural awareness has gotten better, and their IT skills have been improved too. Many people think that ethnic people living in the mountain can't go beyond their village, but we have shown that we can do it.

"Last year when we had to study from home because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many students told me they could not focus well on their studies. Some said that they needed to help their parents in the fields or take care of their siblings, while some others could not get internet connection at their house, so they needed to go to the top of the mountain. Some parents also misunderstood their children. The parents at first thought the children were playing games instead of studying. After I explained to them that it was a game-based learning method, they fully supported their kids. We are back to school now.

"I wish to keep learning and continue to challenge myself so I can contribute more to my community and students. I don't think of myself only as a teacher, but a mentor and a friend who always persuades my students to further their studies. In the future, I hope ASEAN can have a teacher community where teachers from all ASEAN countries can collaborate on various projects, exchange expertise, and learn more from each other." ■

Interviewed by Novia D. Rulistia. The conversation has been edited and condensed for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.

Phuong engages her students in many interactive projects to enliven her classes





Photo Credit: © Ha Anh Phuong

Sharima Ruwaida Abbas

Social Worker. Humanitarian Worker. Academician

Sharima's passion and commitment to the field of social work shines through, whether she is amid the aftermath of a typhoon or flood or in the classroom mentoring the next cohort of social workers.



Social work was not her chosen field of study, but Sharima fell in love with social work from her first undergraduate class. She has since devoted her life as a practitioner and academician.

Sharima's involvement with the Malaysian Association of Social Workers, MERCY Malaysia, Kedah Women Awareness Association and International Federation of Social Workers Asia Pacific has brought her to various disaster relief operations worldwide. In the ASEAN region, she assisted in recovery efforts in the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Indonesia, the 2006 Yogyakarta earthquake and Mt. Merapi eruptions in Indonesia, the 2010 Kedah flooding in Malaysia, the 2013 Haiyan typhoon in the Philippines, the 2018 Lao dam collapse and now with the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia. Through MERCY Malaysia, she has volunteered for more than 16 years and feels blessed for the opportunity given by MERCY Malaysia and Universiti Utara Malaysia to serve in humanitarian work.

Her experiences moved her to include disaster management as part of the syllabus in the social work programme in Universiti Utara Malaysia, where she currently teaches. Sharima was also part of the task force that standardised social work education in all public universities in Malaysia. It ensures that social workers across the country receive uniform training and an equal level of competency.

Sharima brings her experience as a social worker and humanitarian worker from the field to the classroom

Photo Credit: © Sharima Ruwaida Abbas

"The priority was to help the children return to their normal schedule, which would help ease the psychosocial impact. I monitored the building of a school and also did art therapy with the children to help them deal with their grief."

As a member of the Malaysian Association of Social Workers, she was among educators who worked with other colleagues to have a Social Workers Act implemented to increase the level of professionalism in social work.

"My experience in international humanitarian work began during the Indian Ocean tsunami back in 2004. I came 10 days after the disaster and was stationed at a local Islamic boarding school in Aceh, which became a shelter for children who had lost their relatives.

"The priority was to help the children return to their normal schedule, which would help ease the psychosocial impact. I monitored the building of a school and also did art therapy with the children to help them deal with their grief. I still remember that their drawings were dominated by dark colours, with pictures of tsunami waves, people running, sharing of bananas as a means to survive, and rescue helicopters. One child was so traumatised that she refused to bathe for eight weeks, convinced that the water was dangerous. It took time to build trust and take little steps to overcome the fear.

"During disaster relief efforts, social workers conduct assessments as well as providing psychosocial support. We provide moral support and fulfil the basic needs of the survivors to help them get back on their feet.





Photo Credit: © Sharima Ruwaida Abbas

Sharima works with children and survivors in disaster relief efforts

"Based on my experience of doing humanitarian work, women were often the ones to take charge in rebuilding their lives, showing resiliency even in the most adverse times. The elderly also have high resiliency.

"People often have the misconception that social work is the same as volunteerism. It is important for people to recognise that social work is a professional field. We are giving services based on skills, knowledge, practice, value and ethics to do no harm. We provide assistance and empower the client to make sure that they will be able to assist themselves.

"It would be beneficial for social workers in the region if ASEAN can work towards ensuring that social work is recognised as a profession in all ASEAN Member States." ■

Interviewed by Kiran Sagoo, PhD and Pricilia Putri Nirmalasari. The conversation has been edited and condensed for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.

Snapshots

#StandTogetherforSocialWorkers

THE UNSUNG HEROES



NOVIA D. RULISTIA
STAFF WRITER, *THE ASEAN*

For Kittiya Srisuttho, a social worker in Thailand, social work connects people and brings them into a circle where help can come quickly. Srisuttho travels all over the Tha Sala district in Lobpuri Province to support children and families impacted by poverty and violence, the homeless, and people with disabilities.

"What inspired me to become a social worker is the feeling that I can understand the stories told by those who suffer. Social workers in local administration organisations play an important role in bringing external welfare and assistance to people in the community. If we have more social workers, it can help improve the system to better serve vulnerable groups," says Srisuttho.

Srisuttho is one of several social workers in ASEAN featured in a series of video stories released as part of the #StandTogetherforSocialWorkers campaign 2021. ASEAN and UNICEF jointly launched the campaign, with



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the ASEAN Member States, on 16 March 2021, World Social Work Day. It aims to shine a light on the impact, diversity, and importance of social workers in the region and how they help improve the lives of children, women, families, and vulnerable communities in the region.

A 2019 study by UNICEF reveals that despite their complex and challenging duties, the value of social workers is not widely recognised in the region.

Dr. Ha Thi Minh Duc, Viet Nam's Senior Official Meeting on Social Welfare and Development focal point for the campaign, says that social workers play a critical role in protecting the well-being and welfare of people at any time, ensuring that support is provided promptly for people in need, especially the poor and the vulnerable.

"We need to explicitly acknowledge their roles, raise awareness of their work, create an enabling work environment, and work towards improving the quality of service and professionalisation of their jobs and skills," adds Dr. Duc.

She says that to ensure that the public understand their roles in a method that is easy for a wider audience to grasp, a campaign through video and other channels is deemed the most suitable.

Rachel Harvey, UNICEF's Regional Child Protection Adviser, says that while passion for the work drives many social workers into this, they must receive the recognition, resources, and support they require to deliver for the most vulnerable in society.

"Social work is still not recognised as a profession by law in many countries in ASEAN. Instead, it is often viewed as carrying out charity work. Limited understanding of their role and value impacts both demands for their services and public investment in social work," Harvey says.

The **Hanoi Declaration on Strengthening Social Work Towards Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community** adopted at the 37th ASEAN Summit in 2020 recognises the need to promote positive public perceptions on social work. The campaign is a vital contribution to the implementation of the Declaration.

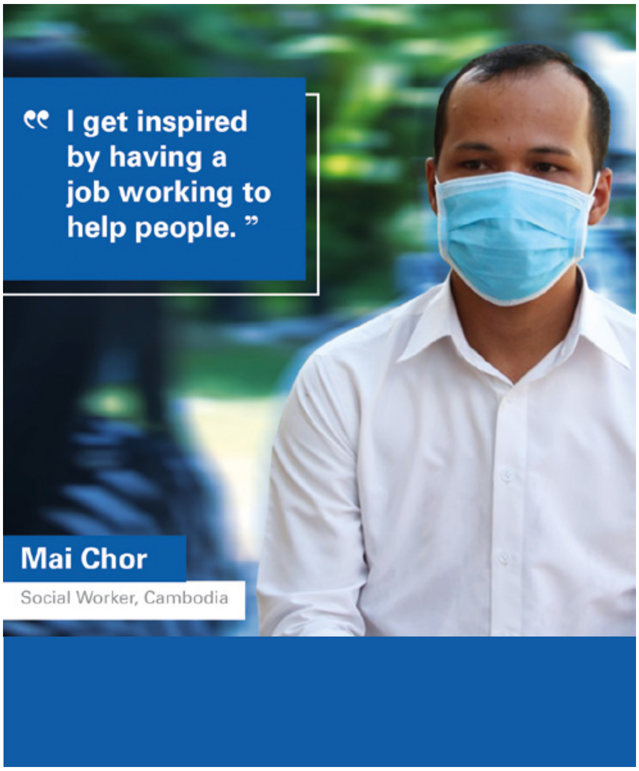


"We need to explicitly acknowledge their roles, raise awareness of their work, create an enabling work environment, and work towards improving the quality of service and professionalisation of their jobs and skills." - Dr. Ha Thi Minh Duc

In most ASEAN countries, the social service workforce is often underfunded, with insufficient social workers and resources to reach vulnerable communities and deliver social welfare services. Such situations, coupled with negative public perceptions, have made it challenging to attract and retain social workers.

Promoting positive public perceptions and raising policymakers' awareness of social workers are critical to transforming social work. The shift will draw in more investment in social work and expand the social service workforce. The campaign also calls for the implementation of the 2020 Hanoi Declaration to reform legislation to professionalise social work, build the workforce's capacity, and improve the recruitment and retention of social workers by increasing job satisfaction and opportunities for career development.

Photo Credit: © UNICEF





Harvey says the campaign is part of a broader engagement on social service workforce strengthening, which is at the heart of UNICEF's work on child protection systems. UNICEF will continue to work with ASEAN and ASEAN governments to translate the Hanoi Declaration into action, including supporting the development and implementation of a road map for strengthening social work. UNICEF will also support the ASEAN Training Centre for Social Work and Social Welfare, based in Bangkok, as the centre plays a crucial role in building the capacity of social workers in the region. On the country level, UNICEF assists ASEAN governments and collaborates with partners to identify social service workforce and social welfare needs in each country, build the workforce's capacity, and expand social work.

"The campaign message is clear—we must collectively recognise the invaluable contribution of social workers and ensure they are effectively supported and equipped to provide vital support to communities and the most vulnerable in our societies, including children," Harvey says.

Social Workers During the Pandemic

Social workers have played a central role in mitigating the impacts of COVID-19, which have increased and exacerbated vulnerabilities, including exposure to violence. Many social services have shifted online, but social workers still provide direct critical services to those most in need, putting their lives at risk.

"In addition to advocating for and supporting ASEAN governments to continue or quickly restore child protection services to keep children safe from violence, abuse and family separation during containment measures, it has been critical to ensuring that social workers on the front line are provided with the knowledge and equipment to keep themselves and those they support safe from COVID-19 as they carry out their job," Harvey says.

Supporting social workers' mental well-being is also crucial given the challenging scope of their work. Harvey says that in several countries, UNICEF set up helplines and platforms for frontline workers to access support, allowing them to take care of themselves.

"If they are not supported to take care of themselves, we can't expect social workers to effectively deal with the difficult and complex cases they face, especially given the increased stress on everyone that COVID-19 pandemic has brought," Harvey says.

Reflecting on the campaign message, she highlights the need to continue to recognise the importance of supporting social workers' mental wellbeing in the longer term, not just during the pandemic, given the challenging work to reach the most vulnerable.

NOTE: The social service workforce is an inclusive concept referring to a broad range of governmental and non-governmental professionals and paraprofessionals who work with children, youth, adults, older persons, families and communities to ensure healthy development and well-being. ■

Learn more about the #StandTogetherforSocial Workers campaign
https://www.unicef.org/eap/lets-stand-together-social-workers



ASEAN LEADERS' MEETING

24 APRIL 2021

In a historic first-ever Leaders-level meeting at the ASEAN Secretariat, the ASEAN Leaders met on 24 April 2021 to discuss issues related to ASEAN Community building including measures to hasten the region's recovery from the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, and strengthening ASEAN's external relations, whilst addressing other salient issues of common concern.

From these discussions, the ASEAN Leaders reiterated the need to ensure political stability in order that a peaceful, stable and prosperous ASEAN Community may be achieved. With a view to maintain ASEAN Centrality and unity, the Leaders underscored that ASEAN needs to leverage on its strengths of putting people at its centre whilst fulfilling their desire to live in a shared region of lasting peace, shared prosperity, and social progress. The ASEAN Leaders also discussed the recent developments in Myanmar and had underscored ASEAN's role in facilitating a sustainable solution that would prioritise the interest of the people of Myanmar and their livelihoods. To that end, the Leaders had agreed on a Five-Point Consensus. ■

Read the Chairman's Statement at ***https://asean.org/storage/Chairmans-Statement-on-ALM-Five-Point-Consensus-24-April-2021-FINAL-a-1.pdf***

Five-Point Consensus

- First, there shall be immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar and all parties shall exercise utmost restraint.
- Second, constructive dialogue among all parties concerned shall commence to seek a peaceful solution in the interests of the people.
- Third, a special envoy of the ASEAN Chair shall facilitate mediation of the dialogue process, with the assistance of the Secretary-General of ASEAN.
- Fourth, ASEAN shall provide humanitarian assistance through the AHA Centre.
- Fifth, the special envoy and delegation shall visit Myanmar to meet with all parties concerned.

Photo Credit: © ASEAN Secretariat/Kusuma Pandu Wijaya



WORKING TOGETHER, BUILDING BACK BETTER



KIRAN SAGOO, PHD
SENIOR OFFICER, ASCC ANALYSIS DIVISION

As the ASEAN Member States deal with re-emerging waves of COVID-19, collaboration between various ASEAN sectors and partners has become more apparent. This is critical to enabling ASEAN to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and work towards recovery. This priority remains top of the agenda in various ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) meetings attended by ministers and senior officials in the region in the first quarter of 2021.

Guided by Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN Chairmanship 2021 theme of "We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper," the ASCC is focused on developing its resiliency, strengthening its preparedness to deal with future challenges, and creating opportunities for sustainable development. In March, ASCC Council ministers attended the 25th ASCC Council meeting. The council endorsed plans of action to address the needs of migrant children, protect children from online abuse, and empower older persons. These plans will put into action several ASEAN declarations adopted in recent years. The ASCC Council also endorsed a roadmap to strengthen social work and a master plan on rural development and poverty eradication.

Social protection continues to be a priority for ASCC, even more so under present conditions. A comprehensive framework on the care economy is being developed. It will enable

Photo Credit: © may_chanikran/Freepik Premium

ASEAN to craft policies that will strengthen its responsiveness and readiness for social protection measures.

To advance policies on environmental protection, the ASCC Council endorsed plans of action for combatting marine debris and adapting to drought, both increasing concerns in the region. In the meeting, officials also deliberated on plans to establish the ASEAN Climate Change Centre, one of the new initiatives introduced under Brunei Darussalam's chairmanship this year.

Other initiatives discussed include the Strategic and Holistic Initiative to Link ASEAN Responses to Emergencies and Disasters (ASEAN SHIELD) to enable better coordination and preparedness in the region.

Information ministers from the region attended the **15th Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information** in March 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic has spotlighted ASEAN citizens' need for regular, timely, and transparent information sharing.

School closures and work-from-home arrangements have sharply increased the region's need for digital resources. The **Framework for Developing Digital Readiness Among ASEAN Citizens** was endorsed at the meeting. It defines three components needed to address the digital divide: access to technology, online resources, networks and communities; digital literacy, including awareness of online scams and cybersecurity risks; and inclusion in the creative use of technology.

Officials also expressed support for the **Framework for Promoting Accessibility for All in ASEAN Digital Broadcasting** and initiatives to improve communication between ASEAN and its citizens. The projects include the "ASEAN Champion" podcast series and the "Conversations with ASEAN Citizens" brochure published in 2020.

Also, in March, over a hundred officials representing various sectors from ASEAN's Socio-Cultural, Economic and Political-Security communities and ASEAN entities participated in the **16th Coordinating Conference on the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (SOC-COM)**. Focusing on post-COVID-19 recovery and resilience, the conference focused on building collaboration between the various sectors to build back better.

The conference reviewed progress on the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, noting that over half of its 183 activities have commenced. The ASEAN Centre on Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED) will soon be established.

With the ASCC Blueprint 2016-2025 reaching its mid-point, discussions are also underway for formulating an ASEAN Community Post 2025 vision.

Following the SOC-COM, the **1st Partnership Conference** on the region's post-COVID-19 recovery was also held. Various ASEAN sectors presented their priorities and identified relevant activities planned for the next five years that contribute towards post-pandemic recovery. ASEAN's partners from Australia, Canada, Italy, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the US; selected UN agencies and international organisations, identified areas of mutual interest for potential collaboration. ■



ASCC Council is composed of Ministerial-level representatives from the 10 ASEAN Member States. It is chaired by the Council member from the Member State holding the ASEAN Chairmanship. It meets at least twice a year and oversees and coordinates the activities of all the relevant Sectoral Ministerial Bodies under its purview. It submits its reports and recommendations to the ASEAN Summit through the ASEAN Coordinating Council. It is assisted by the Senior Officials Committee for ASCC (SOCA).

The **Senior Officials Coordinating Conference Meeting** (SOC-COM) functions as a "coordinating conference". Given the significant number of projects and inter-related issues under the various sectoral bodies as well as challenges faced by ASEAN to implement them effectively, there is a need to coordinate across sectors and the other two Communities to monitor the implementation of programmes and projects of the ASCC Blueprint.

SOC-COM reports to and supports the work of SOCA, which in turn reports to the ASCC Council.

SOC-COM is attended by Chairs and Vice-Chairs of sectoral bodies under the ASCC; Chair and Vice-Chair of SOCA; Chairs of the Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) and Senior Economic Officials Meeting (SEOM); Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR); Relevant regional entities and ASEAN Secretariat. SOC-COM may be convened twice a year and is chaired by the Secretary-General of ASEAN.



ACROSS THE INDIAN OCEAN: INDIGO'S VOYAGE TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

KIRAN SAGOO, PHD
SENIOR OFFICER, ASCC ANALYSIS DIVISION

Indigo derives from the Greek word "indikon," meaning "from India." The Indus valley civilisation in 4th century BC discovered that the *Indigofera* plant could produce a blue dye. A complex and time-consuming process of soaking, fermenting, and drying indigo leaves was developed to harness this dye, turning it into a valuable trading commodity.

Photo Credit: © Benjamas_Photovec/Shutterstock



As the desire for Indian indigo increased over the centuries, masterful techniques for creating luxurious and intense shades of blue became tightly guarded family secrets, passed down through generations. Indigo's worth continued to hold high, and by the 17th century, it was sought after by the British and Dutch East India Companies.

By 1850, Bihar and Bengal in India were supplying about 80 per cent of the world's indigo. This success was not without considerable cost, as human exploitation was built into the plantation system. Harsh measures were imposed on farmers to force them to shift from planting food crops to growing indigo. Poor weather conditions, however, resulted in low crop yields and eventually starvation. Between 1839 and 1860, riots were common, resulting in what is known as the Indigo Rebellion. The rebellion emerged again in the 20th century and came to the attention of Mahatma Gandhi. He assisted the farmers through non-violent disobedience and negotiated an improved agreement for indigo workers.

Indigo, together with salt, are commodities associated with India's independence movement.

Indigo Textiles in Southeast Asia

Indigo's presence in Southeast Asia can be traced back prior to western expansion. The ships that sailed under the midnight sky, brought with them this precious dye and India's ancient dyeing techniques. These techniques continue to thrive in the region. Indigo features prominently among Southeast Asia textiles, appearing in printed, woven or tie-dyed textiles.





Fabrics from the region
Top to bottom: Indonesia, Malaysia, Lao PDR

Fun Facts

- The indigo dye is considered to be "alive" in some communities. Since the indigo dye is believed to be prone to "sulking" when it witnesses a marital quarrel, offerings need to be made to appease the dye.
- Indigo recovered from 17th century shipwrecks are still usable today.
- Indus valley farmers traded the indigo dye, known as blue gold, for gold and jade from Persia and Mesopotamia, and later Rome and Greece.
- In Western Sumba, Indonesia, ikat cloths dyed with natural indigo were far more expensive than those dyed with synthetic indigo, because the former entailed the sacrifice of a piglet.
- In Thailand, the juice of boiled red ants are added to darken the colour of the dye.

Pekalongan, Lasem and Solo, on the island of Java, Indonesia, are part of a network of three cities that produce *Batik Tiga Negeri*. Batik is a dyeing method common in Indonesia and Malaysia that uses wax over patterns to resist colours. Historically, the process involved the batik cloth travelling to the three different towns in Java and dyed according to their signature colours: red in Lasem, brown in Solo and indigo in Pekalongan. *Batik Tiga Negeri* was highly popular between 1950-1970.

Cambodian silk *ikat* textiles were once considered the finest in the world. The industry is making a revival after a decline in the 1970s, and since 2018, the local industry has been producing sufficient indigo dyes to include it in their textile designs.

The Hmong communities in Viet Nam, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Thailand, maintain strong natural indigo dyeing traditions. Hemp is used to make a fabric, which is tinted with indigo that is so dark, it looks almost black. For some tribes, the darker the indigo, the more prized is the cloth.

In Sakon Nakhon, Thailand, indigo cloth is an honoured part of the community's

Photo Credit: © zaidiamri/Shutterstock; © Leonard S/Shutterstock; © John Cumbow/Shutterstock

"Throughout Southeast Asia, indigo dyeing is steeped in mysticism and spirituality, with women often considered sacred keepers of this knowledge."





From left
An indigo cotton master dyer.
Textile from Chiang Mai, Thailand.

identity. The local indigo industry is strong and a significant source of income for the villagers. Civil servants are encouraged to wear indigo-dyed clothes on Fridays.

Indigo is prominent in the *suet pat*, a traditional long-sleeved shirt worn by women in Lao PDR. The *pha sin*, a woman's ceremonial skirt, also uses an indigo base which well illustrates the beautiful zigzag weaving patterns.

The Isinay community in Luzon, Philippines, uses indigo in their ceremonial textiles. The Mangyan indigenous group, initially the only inhabitants of Mindoro Islands, Philippines, uses indigo in their traditional Ramit textile patterns.

Intricate designs using indigo threads feature in Brunei Darussalam's and Malaysia's woven fabrics. The fabric is used as a *kain samping*, which forms part of the traditional Malay attire, and also in more contemporary ways.

In Malaysia and Singapore, a new generation of artisans have revived the use of natural indigo dyeing in their fabrics. Fueled by the drive to manufacture more sustainable clothing, a range of contemporary everyday wear is being produced with natural dyeing methods, including indigo. Indigo is also incorporated into contemporary Malaysian batik.

Women and Indigo Production

Throughout Southeast Asia, indigo dyeing is steeped in mysticism and spirituality, with women often considered sacred keepers of this knowledge.

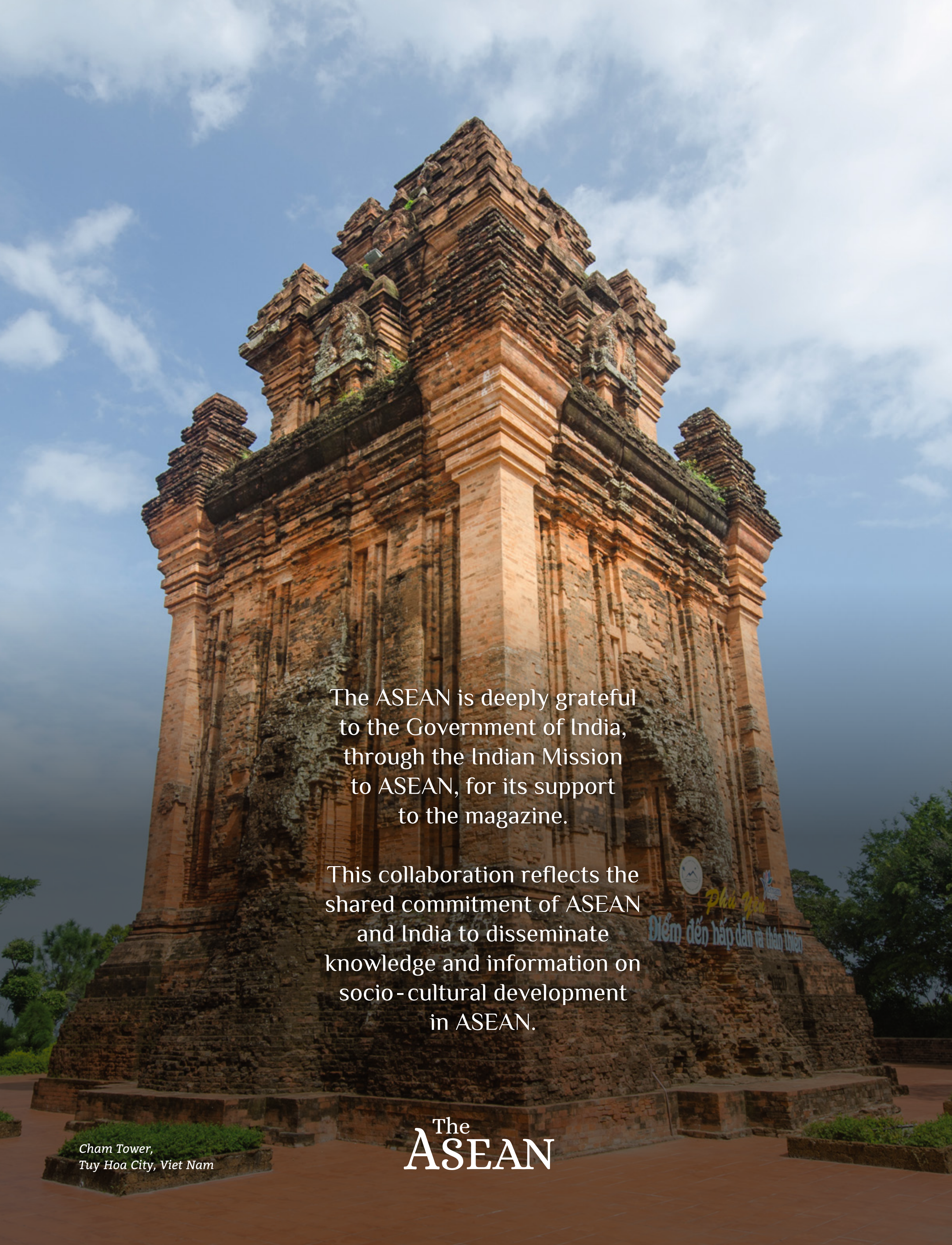
The dye is considered alive in some communities, such as the Khmer community in southern Thailand. Before an indigo dyer passes on well-guarded knowledge to another dyer, the community holds a ceremony to pay respects to the indigo dye. The perceived powerful nature of the dye has stopped potential students from learning the craft, for fear of misfortune befalling them.

In certain communities, men and women of childbearing age are not allowed near the dye vat, as their presence is said to be detrimental to the dye's well-being. This belief is shared by communities in Rote, Indonesia, and Nagaland, India. Similarly, a couple quarrelling in front of a vat of dye could supposedly cause it distress, so the indigo would need some cajoling.

These practices put the production of the dye in the hands of older women. In Sumba, Indonesia, women who are knowledgeable about the art of indigo dyeing are also considered qualified herbal healers and midwives. ■

Sources: Jenny Balfour-Paul, Indigo in South and South-East Asia, Textile History; Victoria Finlay, Color: A Natural History of the Palette, Random House, 2004; Robyn Maxwell, Textiles of Southeast Asia: Tradition, Trade and Transformation, Tuttle Publishing, 2014; Danielle Geirnaert, 'Textiles of West Sumba' in Gittinger ed, To Speak with Cloth-Studies in Indonesian Textiles, UCLA 1989; Marjo Moeyes, Natural Dyeing in Thailand, White Lotus, 1993

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